

THE ARGOSY.

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WHEN LEAVES WERE GREEN.

BY SYDNEY HODGE.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE LAND'S END.

“HAUL up the tack of the mainsail, Gibbs, and get the foresail off her. We'll bring up a little further on.”

Like all ardent yachtsmen, Forbes liked, whenever practicable, to steer his vessel himself. He kept a steady hand on the tiller as the *Mayfly*, with a breeze from the nor'-west, stood well into Mount's Bay. Penzance was before them, glittering in the beams of the morning sun, for they had run down from Falmouth during the night, and all the party were now gathered on deck to watch the marvellous beauty of the scene around.

The view was indeed lovely. Old St. Michael's Mount, with its stern rocks and hoary castle, rose grandly up to the right. In front were the quays and houses of Penzance, backed by the woods of Madron and the purple hill of Castle an Dinas. To the left lay the quaint old town of Newlyn (the School of Newlyn yet unthought of), its strand alive with a busy multitude who were landing huge quantities of “hake” from the fishing boats, which lay with their brown sails fluttering in the breeze just off the quay. Behind Newlyn a steep slope of meadow-land rose up to the grey tower of St. Paul, which stood out in clear relief against the exquisite filigree of cloud in the western sky.

“Hard down, sir,” said Gibbs, the veteran sailing-master. “We'll bring her up here. We're quite close enough in.”

Forbes jammed the tiller hard down. The yacht rounded gracefully up into the wind, the anchor flashed into the sea. The vessel forged ahead a little until she felt the strain of the cable, and then,

with a fluttering mainsail, fell back and lay like a bird at rest on the placid waters of the bay.

"By Jove, it is a lovely place!" said Forbes, joining the group, who were gazing over the quarter at the beauties of the shore. "I've seen it half a dozen times, but every time I see it, I like it better, don't you know."

"It seems to me, judging from pictures, that it must be more like Italy than any part of the English coast," said Glyn.

"And I can answer for it the sea is as blue as the Mediterranean," said Blanche.

"And I think we shall enjoy it more when we have had breakfast," said Sir Percy.

"In which sentiment I quite coincide," said Mrs. Byng.

"We have no time to lose either," Forbes continued. "We must get a long day at the Land's End. Send a boat ashore, Gibbs, and order a wagonette to be ready in an hour. I don't much like the look of that mackerel sky," he added. "We shall have wind by-and-by. After all, though, it's better to have a bit of a tumble to see the Land's End to advantage, don't you know?"

A start at the appointed time brought them to the "*First and Last*" inn before noon, and then they entered upon that wild tract, the like of which is not to be seen elsewhere on all the weather-beaten western coast.

First a few straggling cottages built of huge masses of granite strong enough to defy even the Atlantic gales. Beyond these a wide uncultivated tract of short grass and grey boulders, interspersed with patches of hardy ferns and stunted heather. The hoar lichens of a thousand years lay on these boulders, whitening them as if with age. Beyond the brink, where the plain dropped suddenly to the sea, lay a vast expanse of blue heaving water, its surface flecked by "white horses," which driven by the increasing gale, swept grandly on towards the savage rocks of the Land's End itself. A mile or two from the shore the Longships Lighthouse reared itself aloft amid a circle of white foam, and far away on the dim horizon the faint forms of the Scilly Isles lay like specks of grey cloud. Overhead the sky spread broad and blue, with here and there a few masses of cloud-wrack scudding hurriedly across the clear expanse, like heralds of the coming gale.

Glyn was in a seventh heaven of delight. He had never before looked on such a scene as this. He tempted Blanche out to the furthest promontory, the veritable Land's End, and there, behind a sheltering rock, they sat watching the "hell of waters" below, with that keen relish which is intensified by close artistic observation. The stiff breeze had increased to half a gale, and the waves, as clear and bright as an emerald, came rushing in with a deafening rush and roar upon the rocks beneath.

Forbes distinctly declined any participation in the rock-climbing, and Mrs. Byng did not seem in the humour for it at present. Sir

Percy sat in quiet enjoyment of his cigar at the window of the hotel. It had come to be such a recognised thing for Glyn and Blanche to be together in these excursions, that nobody thought of interfering. Not that Mrs. Byng approved; only she did not see her way to altering the arrangement so long as Sir Percy did not object. The Baronet, like most parents, was blind to any danger which might arise from the close intercourse of the two young people, and never gave the subject a thought.

For all that, there was danger even to Blanche. Glyn was for ever by her side anticipating her every wish, ministering to every want, and in a thousand little ways, such as love only can prompt, adding to the pleasure of her existence. Woman-like, she received these attentions as a matter of course, without pausing to analyse the feelings which prompted them. Glyn strewed her pathway with flowers. Why he did so, or how that pathway would look without the flowers she had not yet paused to consider.

"I am so delighted that Mr. Forbes thought of this trip," she said. "I never enjoyed anything so much. I think you are enjoying it too."

"Enjoying it!" Glyn exclaimed. Then he stopped abruptly. Some words were on his lips which he would have probably regretted. Blanche looked at him in surprise. He ended tamely:

"I should have little sense of the beautiful if I did not enjoy this," he said. "There is always something to damp the purest pleasures, though," he added, after a pause. "I am haunted now by the idea of all this coming to an end."

"But you may look forward to a renewal of it some day or other. Perhaps next year. Who knows? And then there will be the pleasant anticipation."

"I would rather the reality were prolonged," quoth Glyn. "I should like time to stand still now. I shall never be happier than at this moment. It is not pleasant to anticipate gloomier days."

"But why anticipate them? Be satisfied with the present and make the most of it. For my part I was never in better spirits in my life."

"It is certainly too bad to indulge in gloomy anticipations on such a glorious day," said Glyn, rising and leaning over a huge mass of granite to gaze down into the depths beneath. "What a plunge this would be! Straight down into those mad waters. A sheer descent of granite without a ledge or crevice for at least two hundred feet."

"Pray don't stretch over too far," said Blanche, a little nervously. "Had we not better go back to the others?"

"Ah!" sighed Glyn turning suddenly to his companion, "that's just the one thing that troubles me: going back. We have had three weeks of this happiness; three weeks of perpetual sunshine; we have reached the culminating point, the Ultima Thule, and so we must go back. In another week or so I shall be leaving you and on my way to London alone."

"You forget. It was arranged you were to stay with us for a time to give the finishing touches to the picture."

"No, I had not forgotten that."

"And," continued Blanche, "I have another project in store. You confided in me so far as to tell me your life had been a hard struggle. Will you forgive my asking if this is the reason you have never been to Rome?"

"I don't mind telling *you* that it is," said Glyn frankly.

"Well then, will you let me smoothe away that difficulty? I know my father admires your landscape very much. At a word from me he would purchase it. Could you not in that case treat yourself to a trip to Rome next winter? We shall be there."

With any other person in the world Glyn's pride would have risen straight up on end. He could not feel this with Blanche. Besides, the last four words would, in any case, have conquered him. To be able to carry out the dream of his life and to do it in the company of this fair girl, who was dearer to him than all the world. The thought was Elysium.

"I do believe you are my good angel!" he exclaimed fervently.

Blanched laughed.

"Oh no, I am not, only your very good friend," she said. "I am sure you deserve far more for all your kindness and attention to me. And that prompts me to say what I have had in my mind for some time. You always speak as if you were the only person who has derived any pleasure or benefit from our intercourse. This is hardly fair to yourself."

"But I cannot understand how it is possible that you have benefited in any way," said modest Glyn.

"You cannot? but I assure you I have. It is not only the pleasure you have given me in seeing and watching your work, but it has been a kind of awakening of art instincts within me. You know from our many conversations that I have always felt a keen interest in the lives of the old painters and in their finest works, but I knew next to nothing of the art of to-day, of the methods and aims of living artists. Of course it is contemporary art which should interest us most. You have given me a new interest in life."

"You make me very happy by saying so," Glyn answered.

"Somehow," Blanche went on, "the people with whom I have been associated all my life—people of education too—know very little and feel very little about art. The thought of the vast amount of pleasure and profit to be derived from it never seems to cross their minds. With the men it is all horses and dogs; with the women, balls and gossip. There has always been an inner craving with me for something better, something higher. You have shown me what it meant. I don't mean in painting only, though it has been a great pleasure to learn something of the practice of art, and the thoughts and aspirations of artists; but it has been the same in other things."

Glyn was listening in a seventh heaven of delight.

"What other things?" he asked.

"Why, think of the various subjects we have discussed during the sittings, think of the delightful readings. Oh, I can assure you, you have amply repaid me for any little service I may have done you. It is I who am the debtor."

"I cannot believe that, but it is a greater happiness than I can express, to think that I have been the means of awakening any new sources of happiness in you. If I have imparted any new ideas you must remember that it was the receptiveness of your nature which prompted me. With most people I should have kept them shut up in my own breast."

"Well then, we will agree that we have been useful to each other. That is a very pleasant thought. But in addition to all this interchange of thought, think how much we owe you for your help at the time of the accident. I am afraid Captain D'Eyncourt is not half sufficiently grateful for all you did for him."

"Pray say no more about that," answered Glyn. "I merely did what any other man with a spark of feeling would have done."

"Well, we will not argue about it," said Blanche.

"How glorious all this is!" she suddenly exclaimed, looking over the vast stretch of sea to where the white foam curled around the rocks upon which stood the Longships Lighthouse. "Fancy being shut up amid the chimneys of London at such a time as this, as so many people are—from choice."

She broke into a silvery laugh at the bare idea of such a thing. Evidently she was very happy. Glyn noted this with a secret satisfaction which was new to him.

"I have more than once been wondering how it was that I found you spending the summer at home instead of in London," he said. "Do you despise a season in town?"

"I had two or three of them after I was presented, but I could not stand them any longer. The utter weariness of it was unendurable, and my father is always only too anxious to get away. It passes my comprehension how women can go on, day after day, night after night, thinking of nothing but balls and receptions, to which they go chiefly to see and be seen. It is bad enough with the young, but to see the old dressed to death and trying to look young, going the same round day after day, hardly able, some of them, to drag one foot after another; it is simply horrible."

"Use is second nature, I suppose," said Glyn.

"Oh, they have no souls above it. They have been brought up to it, and they continue in the same groove. But, good heavens, what a mission for a woman. Happily some break away nowadays and settle down to useful work for the good of their fellow-creatures. After all, I suppose it is a matter of education. They do as their mothers did before them, and their grandmothers before that. But don't let us

talk of it. It seems desecration even to think of such things in the midst of all this loveliness; and all this time we're forgetting the Roman project. I suppose I may consider it settled, then, and you will go."

"You don't know how happy you have made me," said Glyn. "Instead of looking forward to a dreaded winter, it seems as if a new life were opening to me. I have no words to thank you."

"Are you two ever coming back?" shouted Forbes, from what in relation to the promontory they were or might be considered the mainland.

"Our host is becoming impatient," said Blanche, laughingly. "I think we had better go."

She put her hand into Glyn's confidently, and they climbed together over the granite rocks and up the grassy slope on which the sun lay bright and warm.

Glyn left his companion with Forbes and the widow, and wandered off by himself to take in the full delight of this new arrangement. How strange it is. Half-a-dozen words may change the current of one's whole life. Glyn had no more gloomy thoughts that day. His heart was as light as the clouds which scudded across the summer sky overhead. To Rome! and with her! The thought was too delicious, and yet it was a happiness which seemed absolutely within his grasp.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WIDOW'S FREAK.

GLYN did not retrace his steps for half an hour, and Forbes availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded to pass a few coveted moments with Blanche, though, with his usual unselfishness and modesty, he was thinking all the time that he was boring her and that she would far rather be with Glyn or some more congenial companion. The widow had also disappeared soon after Glyn's departure. They thought she had returned to Sir Percy.

"I declare there is Mrs. Byng getting down the rocks with Mr. Beverley," Blanche exclaimed, as she and Forbes wended their way back to the hotel, after a short ramble towards Sennen Cove.

"By Jove—so she is!" answered Forbes in amazement. "Doosid odd, you know. She vowed that nothing would induce her to go out to the furthest point where you and Beverley were. She's awfully inconsistent. They'll both break their necks if they get down there."

Indeed the place had a perilous look. Immediately in front of the hotel the magnificent granite rocks dropped abruptly to the sea some three hundred feet below. These masses, all square and grey and rugged, were piled one upon another like a gigantic staircase fit for the Cyclopes of old. Glyn had taken it into his head to scramble

down these rocks, so as to get as near the roar of waters below as the nature of the coast would permit. Much to his amazement just as he was swinging himself from the highest ledge the widow's voice reached his ear.

"Mr. Beverley, will you take me with you?"

Glyn looked up.

"Why, Mrs. Byng," he said, "I had no notion you were near. You don't mean to say you wish to go down these rocks? I thought you were horribly nervous."

"Oh yes, with Mr. Forbes, naturally. He is so unwieldy and awkward. I'm not a bit afraid, really. At least, not with you."

The *empressement* thrown into the last words was not lost on Glyn, but it failed in its effect. He was not as a rule ungallant, but on this occasion he certainly felt that the solitary scramble he had anticipated would be spoiled by having to look after the somewhat helpless widow. He tried to dissuade her from going.

"The rocks are very steep, Mrs. Byng. See, I have to let myself down six or seven feet at the first go off. You will never be able to manage it."

"Yes, but here is a better way to the left. Quite an easy slope of grass. Oh! I must go. I am not in the least afraid; and this air is so exhilarating it makes one feel capable of anything."

"Come along then," said Glyn, who saw that opposition was useless. "Let us see what you can do."

Beyond all doubt he ought to have admired the little woman's pluck. Very few of us at Glyn's age would object to a scramble among rocks with a pretty widow, but somehow Glyn had become impatient of any woman's society but Blanche's, and he would far rather have gone down the rocks alone. He could not, however, deny the practicability of the route pointed out by Mrs. Byng, so he took her hand and prepared for the descent.

Blanche and Forbes were too far off to remonstrate with the widow, so they sat down and watched the adventurous pair with some anxiety.

The slope was easy enough at first, and there were only two or three rocks in the path, involving a jump of not more than a foot or two to a lower level; but presently the way grew steeper, the grass more slippery, and the descent over rocks more precipitous. Moreover there were certain corners to be turned, where you looked down the entire depths to the waters below; spots where even stout nerves might confess to being disturbed without the imputation of cowardice.

"Really, I think you had better let me take you back," said Glyn, as they stood at the edge of a perpendicular rock, from which there was a drop of some five or six feet to the one below. There is hardly a foothold between this and the next, and a slip might be perilous."

"I shall go on, Mr. Beverley, whether you help me or not!" said the determined little widow. "I have made up my mind to get down to that ledge yonder, close to the sea, and when I have once made up my mind, nothing turns me."

At this moment the voice of Forbes was heard from the heights above.

"Beverley, Beverley, don't go any lower! You'll get into an awful mess, don't you know."

"We're all right so far," shouted Glyn in reply. "I am trying to persuade Mrs. Byng to come back."

"And Mrs. Byng will do nothing of the kind," said the widow quietly, and thereupon she suddenly sprang down to a lower ledge before Glyn could anticipate her, or offer any help.

He was annoyed at her obstinacy. "You will really get into difficulties if you don't mind," he said; but the widow only laughed the louder.

What possessed the woman? Glyn had never before seen her so flushed and excited. He felt that all his energies would be taxed to keep her from getting into real danger.

They had to turn an angle of rock which hid them from the view of anyone on the heights above. It occurred to Glyn that Blanche would be in a great state of anxiety about her friend, and he said so.

"Oh, no! She is quite accustomed to my eccentricities," said the widow. "Besides, she knows I am in good hands."

"But you are not in my hands!" remonstrated Glyn. "If you will go on, I decline the responsibility."

"Then I will go on my own," cried the widow laughing again. "See, it is as easy as possible. If you don't come on, I shall positively think you are afraid."

Glyn found it useless to protest. The only thing therefore, was to make the best of it. He had already concluded that his companion's little nervous fits were sheer affectation. When it suited her, she had no lack of pluck and energy.

"At least, let me go first, Mrs. Byng. You may sprain your ankle in one of those jumps, if you won't accept help."

Mrs. Byng had no objection to this arrangement. The situation was decidedly romantic. Their progress downward, obliged the little widow to put herself in various positions, which displayed her well-rounded figure to the utmost advantage. She was quite conscious of the fact and did not in the least object to it.

In spite of himself, Glyn could not help admiring her pluck and perseverance. She gave him very little trouble even in the most difficult places.

Presently they reached the lowest attainable point—a huge platform of rock, some fifty feet above the swirling waves. They could hardly draw breath, for the strong salt wind came in fierce gusts over the edge of the rock, and struck them in the face as with a hand. Sometimes a swirl of water dashed over the rock itself, up almost to their feet.

"You will be quite soaked with the spray!" shouted Glyn. "Had we not better go back?"

The din of the great rushing waves was so great, that Mrs. Byng was obliged to shout her reply.

"No. This is grand. Let us stay a few minutes; but give me your arm."

She clung close to him, with a tenacity which amused him after her recent independence. The unusual exertion had brought a rich glow of colour to her cheeks—her face was wet with the spray—her hair blown about in "most admired disorder." In truth she was very pretty. Glyn was forced to admit this, in spite of his admiration of Blanche.

A huge wave, leaping upward to their very feet, warned them to retreat. Glyn glanced upward at their route, and then for the first time realised the difficulty of returning. The bold, bare rocks, denuded even of lichens at this point, rose up like the bastions of a mighty fortress, sheer from base to summit. The crannies and ledges which had helped their descent, were invisible from the effects of foreshortening. There really seemed no practicable route. The widow's eye followed Glyn's glance, and then, to his horror, he saw her turn quite white.

"I cannot go back," she said faintly.

Her nerve seemed suddenly to desert her. Glyn was seriously alarmed, but he put a good face on the matter.

"Oh, yes, you can," he said. "It is not half as difficult as it looks. Not a quarter as difficult as it was coming down."

"But I didn't realise it then. It looks perfectly frightful," was the answer, which struck Glyn with fresh dismay.

"Let us begin at once," he said. "It must be done."

Not a word did the widow say. She allowed herself to be led passively to the sort of miniature *cheminée* by which they had reached the lowest point.

"Now if you will lay hold of my hand I will pull you up," said Glyn.

She placed her hand in his. Glyn planted himself firmly on the slope of rock, holding the widow with his left hand and steadying himself with the right. Then he managed to scramble up, dragging his companion after him.

They were over the first difficulty and on a safe ledge, but suddenly Glyn felt his companion's hold relax, and the next moment she sank down on the ledge, utterly helpless.

"Mrs. Byng, for Heaven's sake do not give way!" cried Glyn. "Just one effort; we shall soon be over the difficult part!"

But there was no answer.

Seriously alarmed, Glyn knelt down beside her and lifted her head on to his arm.

Then her eyes opened and she looked up into his.

She seemed in no way disconcerted. The colour had come back to her cheek, and her lips were a little parted, showing a row of very perfect pearls within.

The faint looked uncommonly like an artifice.

"A laughing woman with two bright eyes
Is the worst devil of all."

sings Thomas Ingoldsby.

It was a trying moment for Glyn, as it would have been to any man, for evidently the widow was very much in love with him, and he was by no means prepared to be made love to whether he liked it or not.

CHAPTER XV.

AT ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT.

A QUARTER of an hour later Glyn and the widow reappeared near the top of the cliffs.

Forbes met them at the foot of the grass slope in front of the hotel.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I'm awfully glad to see you. Miss Venables has been in a pretty way about you!"

"All's well that ends well," said Glyn, giving his hand to the widow to help her up the last bit of rock. "We have had a stiffish climb, I admit."

The widow looked strangely agitated. As Forbes hastened back to tell Blanche they were safe, she drew close to Glyn and said hurriedly:

"You will never betray me, Mr. Beverley. Promise me that?"

"You cannot suppose me capable of such meanness, Mrs. Byng," he answered coldly.

"I do not," she said. "I believe you are an exception to the rule. I know how apt men are to malign us when they get together. After all it was my own weakness that brought it on me, and I quite deserve to suffer."

The widow put on a look of affected penitence which was intended to elicit sympathy, but it was lost on Glyn, who was staring straight up the slope to where Blanche stood.

"I think we had better say no more about it," he answered quietly, and the next moment they rejoined their friends.

The notion of going back lost half its terrors under the changed circumstances. The proposed trip to Rome was a thing to look forward to, and this thought kept Glyn from falling into those fits of despondency which will at times fasten upon all æsthetical natures. Besides, might he not, with the advantages that were now opening to him, eventually win a name which might justify his even aspiring to the hand of the woman he loved? The thought thrilled him. He was fired with an ambition which burned like new life within him. Fresh projects floated through his mind like inspirations. He would work, work, work as he had never worked before to show mankind

what prodigies of art can spring from fervent love. Dreams ! dreams ! Who has not indulged in them ? but how often are they realised ? How Fate steps in with her unrelenting fingers and quietly puts aside our most cherished plans, while we can only stand helplessly by and see our house of cards, built with such anxious fingers, lying in hopeless ruin on the ground !

They were to leave Penzance on their return trip the next morning, but this time nature stepped in, and there was no gainsaying her edict. It began to blow from the south-west during the night, rain and wind came up in fierce gusts and beat the windows of the hotel, where they were located, with a force which threatened to drive in the panes. The sky had cleared somewhat in the morning, the wind had shifted a point or two, but blew more fiercely than ever, and the sea was a mass of white, raging foam for half a mile outward from the beach. The yacht had taken shelter in the harbour, or she must inevitably have gone to pieces on the rocks during the night. Not a sail was visible in the offing, but here and there a Newlyn fishing-boat with close-reefed lug-sail might be seen struggling onward towards the harbour ; the weather being too wild for the anchorage under Newlyn heights.

"What fun it would be to walk to St. Michael's Mount in this storm. Who'll volunteer ?" said Blanche as they watched the wild waste of waters from the hotel window.

"Why, you would simply be blown away," said Mrs. Byng."

"You couldn't stand up against the gale, don't you know," said Forbes.

"Pack of nonsense ! Going out in such weather as this !" said Sir Percy.

"Wherefore, papa ?" rejoined Blanche archly. "It's not raining a bit, and who cares for a little wind ? Mr. Beverley, you are the only one who seems to approve of the notion. Will you be my escort ?"

Of course it ended as it usually did by Blanche and Glyn starting off. Forbes went with them as far as the quay to see how the *Mayfly* was getting on ; for the boats were jostling each other somewhat roughly even in the sheltered harbour. Here he said good-bye to them and wished them luck.

Blanche, wrapped in her waterproof, battled manfully with the wind which threatened at times to lift her bodily from the sands. Glyn helped her as much as he could by walking to windward, and now and then, in rougher parts of the way, by giving her a hand. But Blanche was plucky and persevering beyond the ordinary range of womankind, and Glyn thought he had never seen her look so pretty as she did on this particular occasion, with the wind taking most unwarrantable liberties with her hair, and twisting her wraps about her so tightly at times that it almost chained her steps, and involved dexterous turns and twists to enable her to free herself from the folds.

But then Glyn thought each new aspect under which he saw her

was the prettiest, and who can blame him, seeing how deeply he was in love?

"It would have been a thousand pities to have gone back without seeing the Mount," said Blanche, as they paused a moment for breath under a friendly sand-bank.

"I quite agree with you," Glyn answered. "I am much mistaken if we do not find it the most interesting part of our trip. Anyway, it recalls one's youthful days. It was the home of Giant Cormoran, you know."

"Yes, but the story says he used to wade over to the mainland. He might have saved himself the trouble, for there appears to be a very substantial causeway connecting the Mount with the shore."

"Luckily for us there is, but it is only dry at low water. At high tide all that is covered. Cormoran must have been too impatient to wait for the tides and preferred a wetting. I wonder where the pit was that Jack dug for him. It is an odd sensation to find oneself actually in a spot so closely associated with the romance of childhood. In those far-off days St. Michael's Mount seemed to me to belong almost to another world."

"And the idea of visiting it would have seemed a fairy dream."

"Precisely: but I am inclined to think it will be a sort of fairy dream even now. Do look at those steep slopes of velvet turf on the landward side, and the cold grey rocks, standing out like huge bastions to seaward, and that crumbling old castle perched on the summit. What a wild weather-beaten look it has."

They were crossing the rocky causeway now, and the old Mount, so pregnant with memories of the past, was right before them. Soon the harbour and the compact little hamlet at the foot of the Mount were reached, and, passing through the narrow gateway in the wall, Glyn and his companion stood at length upon the slopes of the Mount itself.

The weather had brightened wonderfully. The storm had swept the clouds from the sapphire floor of heaven, and a vault of pure, bright blue spread broad above. Only a few torn clouds sped rapidly across the sky, like stragglers from an army hastening to come up with the main body. The shadows from these stragglers flitted rapidly over the Mount with an alternating play of light and shade which added a new charm to its manifold beauties. Castle and rock and velvet turf sank into shadow or stood out in bold relief as rapidly as the changes of a kaleidoscope.

"Here is the old causeway leading up to the Castle," said Glyn—"rugged and rocky and steep as it was in the days of Ptolemy, when the enterprising merchants of those days used to come hither for tin, and introduced the luxury of clotted cream to the Cornishmen of old."

"Do you mean Devonshire cream?"

"Yes, but it is high treason, I am told, to call it Devonshire cream in Cornwall. The Cornish folks had it from the Phœnicians."

"Is that really true?"

"So Tradition says, but I won't be responsible for all Tradition says. I believe, however, it is a fact that cream is prepared in the same way in the East. How infinitely obliged I do feel to the present proprietor for not turning this rugged old pathway into a smooth gravel walk as they would have done near London. One can almost picture to oneself the old monks of Edward the Confessor's time toiling up and down these very stones, or the armoured knight of a later day with drooping plume and lance in rest guiding his steed up to that rare old portal yonder. What a wonderful place it is! It carries one clean out of the present and brings back all the chivalry and romance of five hundred years ago."

They were up at the grassy platform now immediately below the entrance to the tower. Above them the lichened walls rose hoar and grey; beneath, the rocks fell sheer down to the sea, some two hundred feet below. The gale had subsided to a stiff breeze, which still swept the heaving, shimmering sea into windy furrows, and sent fierce showers of salt spray high up the enormous masses of granite that form the western boundaries of the Mount.

"The Land's End was not better than this," said Glyn. "What a glorious day it has turned out. I think it is the most enchanting spot I was ever in."

And then he thought it was the very happiest day he had ever known, for what happiness could be greater to an enthusiastic mind than to stand upon such a spot in such sweet companionship. Enthusiasm got the better of discretion. He spoke again, this time with more fervour.

"How can I ever repay you for all the pleasure you have given me? What a blank the future will seem without you."

The instant the words had passed his lips he felt that he had committed a fatal error. Blanche was leaning out over the low battlemented wall with her head partly turned from him. She gave a slight start as the words were uttered, and turned suddenly, so as to hide her face from him. There was a constrained silence for a moment or two, during which the monotonous thunder-crashes of the waves on the rocks below seemed to come up with appalling distinctness.

Then suddenly, and as if Glyn's words had not reached her, Blanche spoke. "Let us go up to the castle itself. We have a good deal to see yet, and the time is passing quickly."

The tone was so unconstrained that for a moment Glyn thought it possible his unlucky speech had not been heard. He fervently prayed that it might be so, though it was hardly conceivable. At any rate there was no change in his companion's manner, and when their eyes next met, hers at least were as calm as usual.

So together they wandered on through the old castle, and looked at the ancient armour, and the Black Jack, and the old tables and

chairs in the banqueting-hall, which said chairs had borne the weight of successive guests at that goodly board "for full five hundred years." Then they went down into the dungeon below the chapel and up the narrow stairway of the tower to the storm-beaten battlements; and then Glyn (not without a somewhat faltering "take care" from his companion) wriggled himself into St. Michael's chair, and sat with his legs dangling over the giddy depths of rock and sea below.

And the day increased in sunshine, and the wind died out, and a great calm fell upon the face of nature, broken only by the long heave of the waves, and the dull thunder of the surf. And later, when they had again descended to the shore, and Glyn had to some extent forgotten his incautious speech, a happiness filled his heart—born of the bright day and the wondrous beauty of the scene—such as he had never known before in all this novel and delightful intercourse. And Blanche seemed happy too, for, whether she had heard his words or not, by no word or sign did she convey to her companion the least notion of anger or annoyance. And so, like all fairest dreams, the hours slipped by never to return, and that bright morning came to an end.

I dare say we have all experienced the fact that the blackest misery too often follows on our brightest joys. Is it the compensating balance of fate that must either maintain a dull mean or leap at once from the extreme of joy to the extreme of woe? At times we are disposed to think the uneventful dead level of life the best. Glyn had certainly reason to think so when they returned to the hotel. The first thing that met his gaze as they crossed the hall was a telegram addressed to himself. Wondering much what unusual event had caused it to be sent to him here, he opened it mistrustfully, and read the following from the doctor who attended his mother.

"You are wanted in town at once. Painful events have occurred. Your mother is seriously ill."

CHAPTER XVI.

RUIN.

UNDERWOOD, BAGSHOT, & Co. had gone all to smash.

To put it in a few words, that was the news that greeted Glyn on his arrival in town. The news was appalling enough, for his mother's small fortune had gone with them. In an evil moment, like too many other confiding mortals, she had been induced to place the whole of her money, of which she had entire control, in the hands of this renowned firm. The idea of any risk was the last thing that troubled her. Underwood, Bagshot & Co. were as safe as the Bank of England. To breathe a doubt of their stability was tantamount to high treason. A man would have been deemed a raving maniac to

have hinted at such a thing, and in proportion to the confidence of the public, was the wide-spread ruin and desolation which followed their fall.

It is no wonder Mrs. Beverley was seriously ill. Her ruin was so complete that she had literally nothing to look forward to in the future. She was too old and too enfeebled to work. She had always been delicate, and this shock had completely robbed her of the small amount of energy she had before enjoyed. She knew the difficulty that women have in finding any respectable employment, so she had little hope of any help from her daughter. Glyn, therefore, was her only resource; and the thought of being a burthen on him at the outset of his career, troubled her sorely. But this was all she had to look to.

"Never mind, mother," he said, as he sat by her bedside the evening of his arrival in town. "Worse things than this have happened, and we must strive to make the best of it. You mustn't let it weigh you down, for that will not mend matters."

His own heart sank nevertheless, although he would not let it be seen. The blow to him was sudden and severe. The change from the brightness of the last few weeks—from the heaven of sunshine in which he had lived and moved and had his being—to this home-life in gloomy London was in itself bad enough, but the sudden and fatal stroke of fortune, which had prostrated his mother, made it additionally hard to bear.

And yet in some mysterious way this very calamity became in one sense a relief, for the consideration of ways and means for the future kept him from dwelling too constantly on the thought of his separation from Blanche. He must sink all thought of self, at least for the present. Others were dependent on him now. He did not flinch from the thought, but he knew that, labour as he might, it must needs be a long time before he could hope to surmount the difficulties that were suddenly thrown in his path.

Of course the trip to Rome must be given up. This was one of the first thoughts that occurred to him when, after the meeting with his mother and sister, he set himself seriously to consider their arrangements for the future. The money which would have paid for his trip was the only thing they had to rely upon for the present, and there was a long winter before them with no resources except the precarious income which might accrue from Glyn's comparatively unknown artistic skill. This was a poor prospect indeed, for we all know how hard is the struggle which the votaries of art have to undergo—be they painters, musicians, actors or poets—until they grasp the topmost rungs of the ladder of fame. Then, indeed, fortune lavishes her gifts with too profuse a hand, and surfeits her favourites with success; but how few, how very few possess the requisite strength of mind and body to carry them triumphant throught the *mêlée*; how many sink when victory is just at hand!

The more the affairs of Underwood, Bagshot & Co. were gone into,

the more hopeless they appeared. Indeed, as Glyn wisely concluded, it was better to dismiss the matter from their thoughts altogether; for if a hope were indulged in one week, it was sure to be dispelled the next.

"We'll think no more about the wretched concern, mother," he said. "If anything should come from the wreck in the future, all well and good; but for the present it is better to make up our minds to rely on ourselves alone. Thank God, I have got a fair start now, and some kind friends; and perhaps commissions will come tumbling in much faster than we anticipate."

The little house at Brompton was given up, and lodgings were found near Glyn's studio, which was in the old-fashioned district of Bloomsbury. Blanche Venables had, of course, been informed of the catastrophe, and the consequent impossibility of Glyn's trip to Rome. She had written a most kind and sympathetic letter. She regretted much that they would not have Glyn with them in Rome, but hoped for that pleasure another time. "My father will be delighted to take your landscape," she went on to say; "indeed, he tells me he never intended to part with it; so you must remember that it is purchased quite independently of any idea of your going to Rome with us, though I must confess I am very, very sorry for your disappointment. You must, however, look on the bright side of things. With your talent you are sure to succeed, and rely upon it that both my father and myself will always take the greatest interest in your welfare. We shall pass through London on our way, and shall, of course, see you, as we must come and inspect my picture.

"Pray tell Mrs. Beverley how very sincerely I sympathise with her in her great trouble. How shameful it is of these people to bring ruin on thousands in this way! I hope so much to hear better accounts of her health. I shall look forward with the greatest pleasure to seeing her and your sister when we come to town."

This letter was a great relief to Glyn. The sale of his landscape helped him through the dreary weeks of early winter. The lengthening days of the new year found him still hopefully at work, still touching on his portrait of Blanche, and filling up his time with a few pot-boilers which an enterprising dealer took off his hands at a price calculated by the risk of investing in the works of a comparatively unknown artist.

CHAPTER XVII.

GLYN PUTS ASIDE HIS PALETTE.

"THE Venables come to town to-morrow, Kate," said Glyn, handing his sister a letter, as they sat at the breakfast table.

There was no mistaking the joyousness of his tone as he made the announcement. After all the anxiety he had undergone, after all

the dreary November days, the thought was like a breath of summer to him.

His sister looked at him anxiously. She knew his secret. They had no secrets from each other, but she felt the hopelessness of his love, and trembled for the result.

Her own experience of life had not been of a kind to make her take an optimistic view of existence. When still quite young she had loved with all the strength of her young heart a man in every way worthy of her; one whose position and prospects, moreover, were such as to give them every reason to anticipate a happy future. On the very eve of their marriage he was struck down by a fatal disease, which carried him off in a few hours, and Kate Beverley was a changed woman. The light had gone out of her life. From the brightness of girlhood she changed suddenly to the sadness of mature years. She bore the stroke bravely, but from that time she had never known a joyous moment. Why such bitter strokes of Fate are inflicted on some while others, apparently less worthy, escape, it is hard to say. It is one of those things which remain to be "unriddled by-and-by."

"How delighted I shall be to see her again," said Glyn. "I can finish the picture too. Fancy if it should be hung on the line. I do believe it will make a sensation. The papers will notice it. They generally take the pictures on the line first. By Jove, my fortune would be made."

"It is a lovely picture, Glyn; but I would not be so confident, dear. If you build your hopes on it too much, think how dreadful the disappointment will be if it is not well hung."

"Oh, hang it, Kate, I don't wish to be conceited, but they must hang that well."

He would not entertain the thought for a moment that his peerless Blanche should be "skyed." Even supposing the picture to be deficient in artistic skill, the loveliness of the face would preserve it from such a fate. On this point he could not be despondent.

The few days that the Venables were in town flitted by all too rapidly for Glyn. Blanche gave him two or three sittings, and the finishing touches were put to the face the day before their departure for Italy. The thought of their going without him was a bitter trial to Glyn, but, apart from his narrow means, there were circumstances connected with his mother's affairs which prevented his leaving town. Indeed, he could not have had the heart to leave her in her present state, even if he had the money.

"When I come back I shall find you quite famous," Blanche said, as the last sitting was drawing to a close.

Kate, who usually did propriety during the sittings, had been called from the room, and Glyn and his sitter were alone.

"I can hardly hope that," he answered. "But at any rate, I shall have to thank you for any credit it may bring me."

"I do not admit that. It is your own talent which will have

brought about the happy result. If I had not sat, someone else would, and the end would have been achieved without my intervention."

Glyn burned to say that no other face could have looked so lovely on canvas, but he knew his sitter hated flattery, so he was silent.

"You will of course let us know your fate at the Academy," Blanche went on. "I will send you our address in Rome, and you must write."

"But you will be home long before that time, will you not?"

"We may not be. It is probable my father may wish to stay abroad for some months."

Glyn's countenance fell. "Of course I will write," he said. "It is very good of you to take such a warm interest in my success. Do you really go to-morrow?"

Blanche's head drooped a little, and there was a slight heightening of colour as she announced:

"Yes—to-morrow evening."

Glyn was silent. In spite of his hopefulness, his heart was heavy at this parting. When last they parted, he had been buoyed up by the thought of the trip to Rome. Now, all was changed. She was to go to-morrow. When would they meet again? Perhaps not for months. The thought was terrible to him.

In spite of all his efforts, when next he spoke his voice faltered.

"Then I shall not see you again after—after to-day?"

His sitter's head sank lower and lower. He was conscious of it, although he could hardly trust himself to look towards her. A sudden hope darted through his mind: a hope so bright, so entrancing, that it sent a thrill through all his frame. His hand shook so that he could hardly hold the brush. He put down his palette.

"I think that will do, Miss Venables," he said.

He strove in vain to control his voice. His lips almost refused to shape the words.

There was no response from his sitter. He looked round in surprise. A great change had come over her; a change that was quite startling to Glyn, who had always thought her so self-possessed. Her whole frame seemed to droop. Her elbow rested on the arm of the chair, and her hand was pressed tightly against her cheek, which was deadly pale. Her eyes were gazing intently before her, with a look in them of indescribable pain.

The next moment conventionalities were cast aside and Glyn was leaning over her with quickened breath.

"Miss Venables—Blanche—tell me quickly. Dare I hope it is the thought of this parting that—that——"

He stopped abruptly. "If he should be mistaken"—that thought came upon him like a chill and stopped his utterance.

"Oh, do not speak to me!" she said. "It is folly—madness. How can I be so weak?"

Her head sank back upon the cushions of the chair. Her eyes were closed, but the lids were quivering with suppressed emotion.

Glyn could bear it no longer. He sank on his knee beside her chair and took her hand in his. She did not attempt to withdraw it, and he went on in broken words :

"It is too late now to recall my words, even if I could," he said. "I cannot let you go without telling you how intensely dear you are to me. You have been my very life for the last few months. No words can describe the happiness you have given me. To lose you is like losing my life."

"Oh, hush ! Do not speak to me so. I cannot bear it !" she answered. "Mr. Beverley, this must not be. You do not know the unhappiness it would cause. Oh, forgive me if I have given you pain ! I have been very weak and foolish. I ought to have foreseen and guarded against this ; but I could not bear the thought that all the happiness I have felt in the last few months was slipping away from me never to return. If—if what you say is true, I have done you a cruel wrong."

She spoke through her tears, and Glyn could see by the quivering of her lips how severe was the struggle she was undergoing. This, and the thought of his own misery, was more than he could bear.

"Blanche, for heaven's sake do not let me feel that I have made you unhappy. You, for whom I would sacrifice my life. I never dreamed that I should say such words to you. I never dreamed that you could care one jot for me. I dare not hope, I know—the very thought in my present poverty would be an insult to you."

"Oh, no, no," she broke in. "It is not that. You do yourself an injustice. It is my father. You do not know his thoughts and hopes with regard to me. Oh, do not make me weaker than I am already. This *must* not be. We can be friends always. You will never have a more devoted one. You will believe that, I know. Now I trust you to help me to be myself again."

She put out her hand to him frankly, confidently. It was a terrible moment to him. The tumult in his heart seemed to beat down reason itself. He turned hastily away and strode across the room. Blanche's eyes followed him with a look of piteous entreaty.

"You are not angry with me ?" she said.

Glyn was by her side in a moment.

"Angry with you ! No. It is this struggle with myself which is so hard to bear. Oh, forgive my folly. If you only knew the strength of my love for you, you would not wonder."

"I do know it. I have seen it almost from the first. I ought not to have encouraged it. But it was so precious to me that I had no strength to resist it. Oh, Glyn, Glyn, what shall I do without you ?"

The words came like a cry of despair, and the next moment he was holding her closely to his heart. For a few minutes there was silence. Then with a long sigh she drew herself away.

"Let me go now," she said. "This cannot be good for either of us. Will you ever forgive me for the suffering I have caused you? Will you believe that the pain of parting is very hard to me as well?"

"I will believe it. It will be too precious a remembrance, and in spite of all it will leave me hope. May God bless and keep you always."

Ten minutes later she was gone, and Glyn sat alone in his studio, his face buried in his hands.

But in spite of the bitter parting, a vague sensation of delight was in his heart—a delight such as he had never known before through all his past and present struggles. The thought that he possessed this girl's love came to him like a glimpse of heaven.

But he saw the difficulties in his way—saw that in his present position it would be madness even to hope. Her words told him, too, that, apart from his narrow means, there was some other obstacle. She had trusted to his honour, and he resolved never to betray that trust. Never again until he could win fame and fortune should another word of love pass his lips. But he would wear the thought of her love like a talisman in his breast to lead him upwards to the highest pinnacle of fame. This was the resolve that sprang from youth and love.

(To be continued.)

NO RESURRECTION!

DEAD love, dead truth, can these come from their grave!

Can he, the lover, traitor to his love,
Run back and fetch the faith that once he gave
Before he was untrue, and humbly crave

Her pardon, and her faithful pity move
To let him once again his worship prove?
Can she, whose falsehood slew the heart that clave
To hers, recall that heart to life and love?

Death, we can smile at thee, when from our sight
Thou dost but hide the face the soul made dear—
Sharp is the pang, and endless the delight,

Because in Death die fickleness and fear:
But trust once slain, no after tears restore,
And truth and love once dead return no more.

MARY A. M. HOPPUS MARKS.

THE WOMAN IN MARRIAGE.



EVER since time began, all through life and literature the behaviour of woman in marriage has been thought and talked of. In Holy Writ Adam and Eve, in Greek literature Admetus and Alcestis, in the Elizabethan age Othello and Desdemona, in the modern drama Thorvald and Nora.

Love is a great subject, but marriage seems to fetch love down from the clouds into our workaday world and to call at once for a clear view as to the ideal line of action. When Shakespeare was young he gave us his exquisite love-stories, his Romeo and Juliet ; and at the end of his life Miranda allaying the soul's Tempest ; but in the full prime and noonday of life he wrought out on the anvil the mighty drama of Othello and Desdemona, of the failure which had a side of lofty triumph.

And in these modern days the discussion of woman's duty in marriage has waxed so hot, that some quiet folk are heartily sick of the subject, and would be glad never to hear it mentioned again. But though this is natural it is surely a mistake. On all sides marrying and giving in marriage will continue, whether it is gone about thoughtfully or carelessly, and, therefore, all light on the subject, even where it only makes darkness visible, seems an advantage. John Stuart Mill in his "Liberty" says: "The only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind." Therefore thoughtful plays, strange novels, more or less foolish letters to the papers from average people are perhaps all in their degree to be welcomed, inasmuch as they set folk thinking and militate against the worst enemy to happy marriage, namely, the entirely random entrance to that holy estate.

But though I would welcome discussion from all sources, my own view of woman's duty in marriage is fully as old-fashioned as it is new, and I have not yet been able to hit on any exposition of it which is nearly so beautiful as our time-honoured Marriage-Service.

There are wonderful stores of wisdom that do not spoil by keeping in the whole teaching of the church on love and marriage. Perhaps some may say that the church exalts the ideal of Virginity or "single blessedness" at the expense of that of marriage, but if we look nearer, this proves a very mistaken idea. Church-teaching is not a haphazard arbitrary heap of stones, but a building moulded by experience. Knowledge of the world will soon show us that most unhappy marriages spring from too low and not too high a value set on a single life. A girl who has fully realised the spiritual birthright of her baptismal vow, to be Christ's faithful soldier and servant and to fight manfully, will see a full life before her to devote to honest, happy work for which she is fit, and will be girding up her loins to the battle. She will not be always scheming to catch a husband, of whatever sort; she will not feel an aching void of aimlessness. But if some wonderful love comes right across her daily lot—"meets her in the row she has to hoe"—then she is far more safe in marrying, for she passes from one vowed life to another; she takes a yoke-fellow who will more than double the force of her fighting under Christ's banner, because two is more than twice one when it is love that works the sum.

No doubt I ought to go further than this and say that there are many human beings for whom a single life is the highest estate. But it is a vocation which is not given to all, for the whole of their lives. But one thing is certain, and that is that it is the right lot of all girls until a really great and reasonable love comes to them.

Think of the miserable marriages you know where some bright active girl leads a life of real slavery with a man she has never loved and believed in, and has the anguish of seeing her children neglected and ill-used, and her own mind and life made hideous by tyranny and brutishness. Reflect a little, and I think you will see that if the girl had been trained to some sense of citizenship, and work in the world, she would not have had so eager a craving for escape, and for a term to be set to monotony ; to marry a man she did not love would not have attracted her. Surely unhappy marriages would be weeded out if parents tried in every way to fill their girls' lives with warm-hearted and intelligent work, and play, and fun, so that marriage was not the only interest to them.

Nowadays, it is much the fashion to think the Marriage-Service too full of plain-speaking, but surely it gives an example to us which we seldom follow. To me it seems the sheerest cruelty to let a young girl embark on the world without a clear and sober knowledge of what marriage means. Marriage is a blessed and holy sacrament, and to enter on so sacred a union with a cold heart set on worldly ends should be looked on with righteous horror. If girls saw that marriage was a huge reality and a sacrament, they would shudder at the thought of doing so terrible a thing as to marry a man they did not love. Much contempt has been thrown on lovers' fondness. The old saw says—"Love flies out at the door, when poverty comes in at the window ;" but that is only a poor mimic love. The love of two Christian folk is able to stand the brunt of poverty : and by love I do not mean mere philandering.

"What is love? Is love in this
That flies between us in a kiss?

Love is poor ; nay, love is sorry ;
Tears, not kisses, chiefly stay him :
His sad weeds best tell his story,
Vain delights befool, bewray him.
Truth, alas ! is hard to bear :
Know as yet love is not here.

But when the evil days are come,
If those same lips which kiss you now,
Still make your tearful eyes their home,
And chide the sorrow from your brow,
Then say to your own heart, my dear,
Abide, poor heart, for love is here.

Love is a light in darkened ways ;
Love is a path in pathless lands ;
Love is a life in winter days ;
A staff in chill, unsteady hands.
Speak to your heart, my own, my dear,
Say this is love, and love is here."

Think twice then before you marry a man you do not love.

"The little more, and how much it is,
 The little less, and what worlds away;
 How a touch may quicken content to bliss,
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
 And life be a proof of this."

You can never overturn an abuse unless you put something instead of it, and marriage has been terribly abused. The clue to unravel the confusion is to remember that marriage is a sacrament; the first sacrament which God Himself gave to the early world. Instead of this, it is looked on as a kind of restful harbour in which to put by the ship, an arm-chair for the sleepy, a way of taking mine ease at my inn, the grave of Quixotic endeavours, the end of the story. Our Lord always took His parables from the life around him, and when called to the marriage supper the man said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come," and alas after 1800 years we have still the proverb, "The devil comes to an Englishman in the form of his wife and family." If a man wants to do some mean thing or shirk some hard and noble enterprise he always puts his wife and family forward as his excuse (*égoïsme à deux*). All this simply comes because men and women have forgotten that marriage is not an arm-chair but a sacrament, not wadding but armour!

This "inward and Spiritual grace given to us" is meant to enable us to do the hardest and most glorious work, to "spin the great wheel of earth about," and not to partake of selfishly, and to do "nothing else than increase our condemnation." This grace will enable a wife to lay by all petty and trivial ambition which could hinder her husband's work, and fill her with joy in helping him. From this sacrament she is meant to learn that her own little love is a wave of the great love of God which is to save the world. I cannot but feel that an unfair share of the blame for this debasing of the marriage ideal has fallen to women. Men refuse them all vote and interest in their country's welfare, and then expect them to understand a high standpoint of the duty of a citizen in their husbands. They confine them to a petty and artificial boundary which they arbitrarily pronounce to be women's sphere, and then are surprised that when yoked closely to them they interfere and spoil the game. If boys and girls were brought up alike to an intelligent education, many marriage difficulties would be avoided. Brothers and sisters would be close friends, and so early marriages would not be so much craved for. I was brought up to care for many of the things that my brothers cared for; and we were all so full of each other in our home-life, that marriage questions bothered us very little until love came and flooded everything with a new sunlight.

The blame then lies much with men, but I am trying to think of woman's difficulties, and until men are roused, she can find the best remedies in herself, and these remedies will in the long run rouse men too.

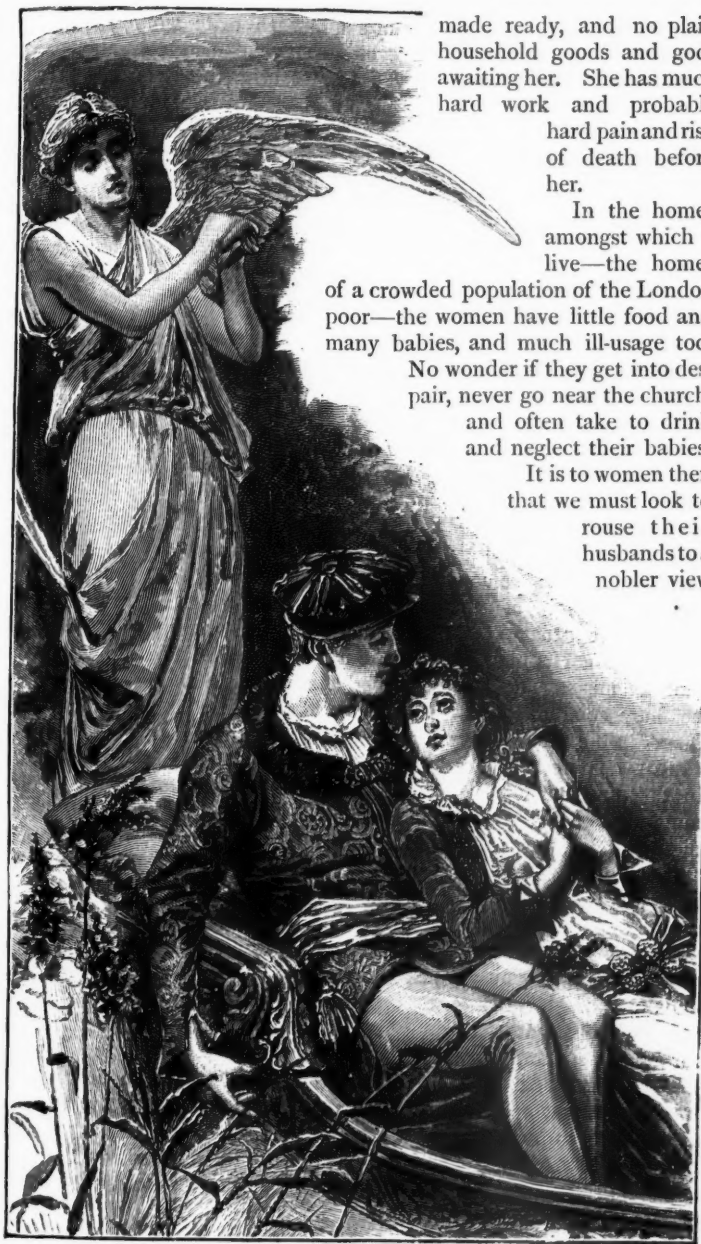
At present the burden in marriage falls very unfairly on women. Men forget that in the ten Commandments "the house" comes before the wife, and too often they take their wife home to no hearth

made ready, and no plain household goods and gods awaiting her. She has much hard work and probably hard pain and risk of death before her.

In the homes amongst which I live—the homes of a crowded population of the London poor—the women have little food and many babies, and much ill-usage too.

No wonder if they get into despair, never go near the church, and often take to drink and neglect their babies.

It is to women then that we must look to rouse their husbands to a nobler view



GOING DOWN THE STREAM OF LIFE.

of marriage, for though men are quick to write women down as worldly, no great cause has ever been won in which they have not helped, and to which they have not been the heralds. If this path of stern self-control seems hard and gloomy, we must remember that we have to fight for a better day coming, and I think that many of our wounds and privations will come from this quarter. After all we want to give the future of our best; to sacrifice what costs us something; and if their life is freer our grandchildren will think lovingly of us:

"Then 'twixt lips of loved and lover solemn thoughts of us shall rise;
We who once were fools and dreamers, then shall be the brave and wise.
There amidst the world new-built shall our earthly deeds abide,
Though our names be all forgotten, and the tale of how we died.
Life or death then, who shall heed it, what we gain or what we lose?
Fair flies life amid the struggle, and the cause for each shall choose."
William Morris.

And in this hard battle the very difficulties of the wife are her gain. She has, in all probability, the greatest of all spiritual opportunities before her, the function of motherhood. She seems to me to be able now to come into mystical communion with God through this new thing which comes to her "from God who is its home." I wish we thought of this more as wives, both gentle and simple. It seems such a great honour conferred on us, such a wonderful vocation to which we are called, that God should think us worthy to give to the world the stamp of His image, and make it current coin. If women thought more of this as a holy vocation perhaps reverence and humility would be more common among their sons, for babies take their mother's marks in the soul for certain, whether or not they do in the body. I cannot help feeling how greatly women ignore their responsibility in this particular. They are bound to be thoughtful and sound-minded, not because they must agitate for their *own* prestige and dignity and rights, but because they ought to stamp vigour of mind and breadth of sympathy on their children as well as vigour of body. Sons *will* care for what their mothers care for. Someone at Cambridge once said to me: "You women will never get the degrees till your sons get them for you. I say: You women will never have just and fair sons till you are just and fair yourselves." George Meredith ends one of his books with the words: "Take up your burden for armour," and that is certainly the safest password in women's battle for a freer, nobler, higher life.

And this reverence for her function of mother is the best way a woman can get her husband to be the sort of mate the prayer-book means him to be instead of a brutal tyrant, or a condescending dispenser of blandishments and kisses. In the worst marriages the man is a little softened at the beginning. More or less, what Othello said of Desdemona, is true even of the roughest men. Many a man would say of his wife's holiness and gentleness, 'tis

"— there where I have garnered up my heart,
Where either I must live or bear no life,
The fountain from the which my current runs
Or else dries up."

And if this feeling is strengthened by seeing his wife's devotion to the welfare of her child in every direction, he will instinctively respect her more, and dictate to her less, and be softened by his union with her. "*Δεινὸν τὸ τίκτειν*," said the old Greek poet; and a great poet among the moderns has no truer words to say than :

"The world has no such flower in any land,
And no such pearl in any gulf or sea,
As any babe on any mother's knee."

Shelley's final break with his first wife came from his disappointment that she cared more for a purple velvet dress and a carriage than for their small Ianthe. He could forgive her want of comprehension for his poems, but not her indifference for their child.

But perhaps you may know of many pattern wives whose husbands tyrannise over them in a monstrous way, in spite of the endless home-spun and beautiful virtues of the wife. This I think is because the Marriage-Service has been more fought over than studied. Many men entirely misunderstand and concentrate their attention on the word *obey*, and look neither to the right hand nor to the left. I contend that, if we look closely at the Marriage Service we shall see that the church says nothing against equality of condition, though she indicates difference of office, as nature does of sex. The man promises to worship his wife, and it is absurd to suppose that the prayer-book intended the man to domineer over the object of his worship. Such a solemn word scouts the idea of the man assuming superiority, but it also makes hideous the notion of the woman being contentious and quarrelsome rather than worshipful. The man by his superior bodily strength is fitted to be the spokesman and business manager, and must have the confidence of his firm, and hence comes the woman's promise of obedience. The promise of worship makes this other promise free from all suspicion of cringing or blindness. To promise obedience to a pagan might indeed be dangerous, but if we marry a fellow-Christian he will know that his wife, as well as himself, is eternally bound by her baptismal promise, and cannot yield to him in a serious matter of conscience, as she is a slave to Him whose service is perfect freedom.

Again, the church guards against tyranny on the part of the husband in financial affairs, and household management, for the husband, so far from engaging a housekeeper, says to his wife: "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," and this is surely an empty mockery unless she is to have some voice in the disposal of her own goods. To me, therefore, though caring intensely for the advance of women in freedom, to be noble instead of mean, and brave instead of cowardly

and deceitful, it was perfectly possible to make the marriage vows, for I felt that the church had carefully adjusted the balances in this "excellent mystery" of marriage, and that in the family life I should be allowed my fair share with regard to decision in matters of conscience : and that in fact, to come down from the clouds, my beautiful marriage morning would not stand in the way of the family motto we had adopted amongst ourselves as boys and girls of :—

"DRINK FAIR, BETSY."

But if a woman puts personal whims always in the way of her husband's work and her children's development, we need not be surprised if the man forgets the worship and takes refuge in tyranny and becomes a sullen moody dictator.

As always, women's fate really lies in their own hands. The place they will have is the place they can *take*, as I once heard a plain man say.

But I must not finish before saying a word or two about the question of Ibsenism, as it is called. The question, I take it, is : "Is it lawful and even desirable that a married woman should 'live her own life,' should develop on her own lines, and continue any artistic or intellectual life apart from wifedom and motherhood?"

I long to answer yes, a thousand times yes. Why did God put talents and powers in any woman but that they should develop, and that her living of her own poor life should spread instead of dwindling miserably within her.

"Spirits are not finely touched
But to fine issues,
For if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not."

But at the same time, she must not develop one part of her nature at the expense of another. If she has chosen to be a wife, and God has sent her children, she *must* manage to unite the two-fold work or give up the intellectual. In marrying she has distinctly laid down the high calling of virginity, and she is bound to follow the high calling of matrimony ; my belief is that she can be the mother of one child or of many children, and yet do magnificent work. But whether or not, the old saying was :

"They that rock the cradle rule the world."

and I am convinced that as soon as women stop rocking the cradle they will cease rather than begin to rule the world.

A new era seems coming in with a marriage of intellectual and manual work, and here again let women achieve great things by going on nature's lines. Charlotte and Emily Brontë thought through their elemental novels while they baked their pies, and I fancy that much

morbidness and warped intellectual standpoint may vanish if we get more thoughts that have come over babies' cradles and in open-air ponderings while children are getting red cheeks and brown legs in the sunshine. We have had many views and books of men, who have sat much in studies, and not made bread and swept floors. If women are to produce original thought, they had better do it like Demosthenes, with pebbles in their mouths, especially as nature has supplied them with the pebbles.

But you will say I have spoken of the Ibsenite and tragic side of marriage, but not of the dusty, petty, common side, where we sulk and quarrel and forget our high start; where

“ — each day brings its petty dust
Our soon-choked souls to fill,
And we forget because we must,
And not because we will.”

Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle loved each other dearly, but they were more miserable and unhappy than they were exalted. Yes, two people who love each other intensely will feel little ignominious unkindnesses and injustice far more than the unloving; and if they once make a bed in their hearts for the bitter reflections called forth by the injustice, they will grow and swallow up the love, or at least widen the breach.

George Eliot says of Maggie Tulliver: “Tom was very hard to her, she used to think in her long night watchings—to her who had always loved him so; and then she strove to be contented with that hardness, and to require nothing. That is the path we all like when we set out on our abandonment of egoism—the path of martyrdom and endurance, where the palm-branches grow, rather than the steep highway of tolerance, just allowance, and self-blame, where there are no lofty honours to be gathered and worn.”

An old German myth tells of Thiof, fell giant of evil, who could be quelled and beaten down again and again if you did not name his name; but if that was once uttered, you could do no more against him. Yes, that's fearfully true. Let married women avoid tragic diaries and confidantes. If they *must* rail at anyone, let them rail at their husbands, but even that is best done jocularly, as fun sends arrows home as well as turns their shafts. Indeed a good “box wherein jokes compacted lie,” were the very best gift a fairy could give a married couple. But common-sense forbearance and no house-room for a grievance is the best recipe.

An old motto for married folk is, “Whatever brawls disturb the street, Let there be peace at home,” and this is full of wisdom. But yet wives ought to remember that there is such a temptation as court-ing popularity, and sometimes an argument is inevitable and *must* be faced. If only the wife keeps her temper no harm need come of it. The husband will possibly not keep his, but if the wife keeps a firm grip over herself, she can get the needful thing said and then be quiet.

Some friction, I think, is inevitable in married life, but I wish wives would economise it! I once heard a man say to his wife in the Wandsworth Road, "Well, if I *am* a bad 'usband, you makes it up a jorin' and a jorin'!"

Shrewd Heine, on his sick bed in Paris, loved Lady Lucie Duff Gordon with all his heart, because she was one of the few married women he knew without a grievance, who did not carry about a wounded heart to be healed by strangers.

Resentment widens wounds, but patience is like the dark purple herb, self-heal, that grows in dusty hedge-rows to heal hard blows, and does not work until it has been crushed.

Yes, the more we think about it, the more we must love and reverence the holy, divinely-appointed institution of marriage; the more we must see that nothing else can ever possibly take its place. Its very difficulties make it so beautiful, for in the words of the old writer—

"A passage perillus makyth a port pleasant."

and if, as our prayer-book tells us, we would begin and continue it with the Holy Eucharist, and try to make our life a sacrament to our Lord God, the key of self-sacrifice would not get lost so often. Then we should have God with us in the thick of the world, just as the old monks were not ashamed to carry the Host through the jostling street, where verily God is most to be sought and found.

"For still the Lord is Lord of might;
In deeds, in deeds He takes delight;
The plough, the spear, the laden barks,
The field, the founded city marks;
He marks the smiler of the streets,
The singer upon garden seats;
He sees the climber in the rocks;
To him the shepherd folds his flocks.
For those He loves that underprop
With daily virtues Heaven's top,
And bear the falling sky with ease,
Unfrowning caryatides.
Those He approves that ply the trade,
That rock the child, that wed the maid,
That with weak virtues, weaker hands
Sow gladness o'er the peopled lands,
And still with laughter, song and shout,
Spin the great wheel of earth about."



THE SONG OF THE GOLDEN CITY.

FROM the days of S. John's Revelation
The marvellous story is told,
And down thro' the ages has come the Song—
The Song of the City of Gold.

To the innocent hearts of the children,
To the toilers who faint 'neath Earth's sun,
To the old who have fought out its problems,
To the dying whose journey is done :

Comes the dream of the mystical City,
With colour and loveliness rife,
Iridescent its jewell'd Foundations,
Flower-border'd its River of Life.

Four-square in its symbol'd completeness,
Thro' its pearly Gates shining afar
The strange indescribable radiance
Unlitten of Sun or of Star.

And the Streets of the City are golden,
And the Sea as of crystal appears,
And the sound of the Harpers is in it,
And it knows not of Sorrow or Tears.

Like a mirage far out in the desert,
Like the fabric that fashions our dreams,
Like some many-hued mirror'd reflection
The heavenly Jerusalem seems !

We grope 'mid the types and the shadows,
We fret at its veiling disguise ;
But our hearts cannot grasp nor conceive it,
Its glory is hid from our eyes.

We catch but a note of the Music,
A glimpse swiftly passing and faint,
A hint of its wondrous Perfection
Low whisper'd to Seer and to Saint.

Yet the glow of it shortens the journey,
And our feet tread more bravely the road
Which leads to the Sorrowless City
Whose Builder and Maker is God.

And thus as a gift to the Ages
The marvellous story flows on ;
And the heart of Man rests on the Vision
That illumin'd the eyes of S. John.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

ELEANOR KEITH'S STRANGE ADVENTURE.

BY E. FAIRFAX BYRNE.

I.

THE circumstance I am about to relate happened in the beginning of my career as a high-school teacher ; but the solution of the mystery did not reach me until many years afterwards.

My father's will left us girls unprovided for, the small fortune which he possessed independently of his earnings only sufficing for the needs of my mother. There were three of us. I am Eleanor the youngest. The future of my sisters gave no cause for anxiety, as they were engaged to be married ; it was I who formed the knotty point, for as I had not their personal attractions, and was, moreover, in character somewhat pronounced and thorny, the resource of matrimony did not enter into my calculations. My father, whose favourite companion I had been, had, however, given me a first-rate education, inculcating at the same time a spirit of independence. Upon his death, therefore, recalling his counsel to stand in the world on my own basis, I armed my spirit to meet the future opening somewhat obscurely before me, and determined to solve its problems for myself.

I considered myself fortunate when, by a lucky chance I was engaged almost immediately by the head-mistress of a high school in the northern town of M——, as the least amongst her under-teachers, at a salary of £30 per annum, together with board and lodging. This seemed to me satisfactory as a beginning ; it ensured me independence at least. And when, at the end of my first term I received the first instalment of my salary in the shape of a ten pound note, no budding merchant, contemplating the successful issue of an early enterprise, could have felt prouder or more elated than I did. This was the foremost tiny ship returning laden with treasure, from the land of promise whither I had sent all my airy fleet.

How my first ship was wrecked before it quite reached harbour forms the subject of this story.

It was a point of pride with me to be able to carry home the note intact. My mother had supplied me with a small sum to start with, and during the term I had been so economical, that, when it was over, I had one sovereign and a few shillings left ; these coins would suffice for the journey home. Accordingly I drove to the station with a full purse.

The train I had chosen to travel by was an early one, and few save third-class passengers were likely to be starting with me.

This improbability of any fellow-travellers of interest rendered the sight of a somewhat noticeable figure at the station entrance a matter for surprise.

A tall young man stood leaning against the door of the booking-office, perusing the ground with a depressed and even haggard air. His dress was shabby, and yet he possessed refinement, and his features were finely cut. He looked up as I stepped from the cab, and his expression of troubled absorption changed gradually to one of animated interest. I cannot say that there was anything flattering in the gaze with which he favoured me, neither did I feel it to be insulting; there was in it something curiously impersonal and yet eager.

I stood by the cab paying the driver and giving orders about my luggage, and he watched me all the time. Then I passed him and went into the station.

The next time I became conscious of his presence was when standing before the ticket window in the booking-office. I had opened my purse to take out my sovereign, when something, I know not what, caused me to turn my head sharply and to glance over my shoulder. Immediately I perceived that the young man stood on the other side of the rail. He was leaning over me and was looking this time, not at me, but curiously and eagerly into my purse.

"Second-class single to Middleford," said I, and handed the sovereign over the counter, to receive in return a ticket and some change.

The ticket I placed, fortunately for myself, in my glove; the change I put into my purse, and this I continued to hold in my hand.

On reaching the platform I found that the young man, who had vanished from the rail before I left it, was standing by the open door of a second-class carriage marked "Middleford." To see this was at once to make up my mind not to get in there, and I walked to the far end of the traip. Here having selected an empty second-class compartment I seated myself in the corner near the window. And just then there befell a startling event. The door of my carriage was reopened and the space suddenly filled up with the head and shoulders of the young man whom I had before noticed. His appearance was entirely unexpected, and I surveyed him with a sentiment of intense and stupefied amazement, not unmingled with that sort of foreboding which is but the event in shadow. Indeed, the expression of his face excited some disquiet; it was full of menace, his blue eyes (they were I remarked peculiarly blue) scintillated with a very disagreeable threat, while his lips, under a slight growth of moustache, looked pale and tense.

For an imperceptible second we gazed full into each other's eyes, and then the man's glance dropped to the purse lying upon my knee. Of course I at once perceived that I was threatened with robbery, and that to save myself some action must be taken, and that very promptly.

But I found myself already helpless. The young man had put out one arm and held me firmly back in my seat, while with the other he grasped the fingers which I had instinctively closed over my purse. As he did this he leaned forward, thrusting his face so near mine that I felt his breath against my cheek, while he whispered hoarsely and hurriedly—

"Give me your purse! For heaven's sake give it to me! It is a matter of life and death!"

For all reply, I uttered a cry which sounded to my own ears feeble and stifled. Then I made a last faint struggle to free myself. Whereupon a shadow of brutal determination passed over his features; he violently loosened my fingers and withdrew the purse from them. At that very moment a shrill whistle announced that time was up; the train began slowly to move, and rough shouts of—"Come off that step! Now then! Shut that door!" assailed my ears.

The young man vanished and turned the handle. I sprang to the window and attempted a wild gesticulation to the porters who were hurrying up. But there still was the youth running by the side and holding to the door, his pale face, with the brutal look entirely effaced from it, turned upwards to mine. Even in that bewildered moment I could not but notice the change of expression. The eyes were now full of compunction and eagerness.

"Your address!" he panted, "give it me quickly! You sha'n't regret this matter!"

Already stupefied, I seemed incapable of resisting this new demand. I refrained from any further attempt to attract the attention of the porters, and suddenly leaning forward out of the window, pronounced with care to make myself understood, the words—

"Eleanor Keith, Rose Villa, Middleford."

He immediately loosed his hold of the handle, and raising his hat to me with a faint ghost of a smile, turned on his heel. I thrust my head further from the window to gaze helplessly after my lost property, and the last thing I saw was the young man walking off with an easy swinging gait and writing as he went in a note-book. And with that the train dashed into a tunnel, and I saw the platform no more.

Then I sank back on my seat shivering from head to foot. I was too angry to weep, and yet my misery was keen as only a very young creature's misery can be.

The holidays lasted for six weeks or so. It was not a happy time, for my friends did not spare their ridicule; and it was really a relief when the vacation drew towards a close and I could anticipate a speedy return to useful work. The last of the six weeks arrived. I had mended and patched all my clothes, utterly declining assistance in the shape of borrowed money, though this was very kindly offered to me, and was quite ready to take my spiritless way back to duty, when one morning a remarkable thing happened.

I came downstairs and entered the breakfast-room, and at once saw lying upon my plate a registered envelope.

My Aunt Barbara put up her glasses and watched me with some amusement. I took up the letter and turned it over in my hand with a complication of feeling. The post-mark was London, E.C.; the handwriting bold, manly, cultivated—and unknown to me. During the last six weeks I had thought almost incessantly of the blue-eyed thief; at this moment no one was further from my mind. I suspected a present and felt a frown gather upon my brow.

"Come, open the letter!" cried my Aunt Barbara in irrepressible curiosity.

I obeyed, and took out a bundle of papers. Did I not know the crisp feel of those thin, clear oblong pieces well enough! They were bank notes—notes like my own ten-pound note that I had earned. There were five of them; and as I spread them out before me, I read the symbols upon each one like a person in a dream.

Five ten-pound Bank of England notes! There they lay on the table before me, new, crisp, dazzling. But whence had they come? How was it that, like Aaron's rod that budded, the cold straight staff of disappointment and poverty had suddenly flourished out into all this wealth? None of my friends would have dared to send such a gift; a pound or two pressed on me for necessities was all anyone would venture to offer. I fingered them, and stared, and wondered. What could it mean?

Suddenly, from the accustomed place in my memory, where for six weeks I had kept certain indelible impressions, flashed upon me the face of the blue-eyed thief, and with it the words of vague promise he had uttered.

Snatching up the envelope, I searched with a trembling finger while my cheeks alternately flushed and paled. Yes! There was a little note squeezed in at the bottom; I pulled it out and opened it in breathless haste. This is how the shocking little document ran—

"Dear Miss Keith—"

[I was fairly electrified with his impertinence!]

—"I return with many grateful thanks the money I borrowed from you six weeks ago—"

["Borrowed!"]

—"and since my method of proceeding was a little unusual—"

["A little!"]

—"and since your ten pounds were worth to me many times the amount, I beg your acceptance of what is a quite inadequate compensation for the alarm I may possibly have caused you.

"Very sincerely yours,

"HUBERT."

I dropped the note: the excitement I experienced was beyond

words, and the incoherency of my feeling relieved itself in a few scalding tears.

"Come! come!" said Aunt Barbara kindly; "what is it? Who is it? Show me the letter."

But I would not show the letter to Aunt Barbara. I was squeezing it resentfully in my clenched hand under the table, and after a few seconds of angry silence, mastered myself sufficiently to speak calmly.

"Mother! Aunt Barbara!" said I, "it is that thief again. One-fifth of this money is my own. He thinks apparently that I will accept the remaining four notes as a gift from him!"

My mother turned pale. My Aunt Barbara lifted her hands and seemed to struggle for words. At last they came.

"Eleanor!" cried she; "you are in a most dangerous position! This young man wishes to make you his accomplice. Depend upon it, he belongs to the swell mob. We must telegraph to Scotland Yard."

When my Aunt Barbara's imagination was excited, it haunted dark places. I had no wish to form a leaf out of a detective's records, and instinctively shrank into myself and determined to make little of the matter.

"At any rate I have got my money back," said I drily; "it will puzzle this thief or any other to make me an accomplice. Four of these notes are not mine, and of course I shall not use them. For the present I shall put them in the bank, and one day I trust I may be able to restore them to the rightful owner."

Accordingly, I placed the notes in a sealed envelope and committed this to the care of the Middleford Bank, and a few days afterwards returned to school. But not alone! One may as well yield where principle is not involved. Aunt Barbara insisted upon accompanying me all the way back. It was an unnecessary expenditure of money; nothing whatever happened during that dull journey, and we arrived at the end in the most prosaic safety.

II.

DURING the next few years my position as a high school teacher gradually altered for the better; so that by the time I was twenty-five years of age I had become second mistress in a flourishing private school with a salary of £150 per annum.

The school where I was teaching when my story re-commences was in a London suburb, where, as the prospectus said, we had "the advantages of the town combined with the salubrity of the country." The name of the head mistress was Murray. In a girl's school, of all places in the world, one would suppose oneself safe from excitement, romance and mystery; nevertheless, it was while within Miss Murray's sacred enclosure that the second chapter of the story of my lost bank note found its way to me.

Miss Murray was an ambitious woman, and as the importance of her school really demanded it, she was in the habit of paying a university man to come down once a year in the summer to examine the pupils. This event had taken place annually ever since my coming to the school; the examination occupied three days, and it was my duty to superintend. It had always been a prosaic and somewhat arduous undertaking, and its sole redeeming feature was that it preceded the long vacation.

One year, however, the monotony was broken by an extraordinary event.

On a warm midsummer's morning I rose early, my mind full of examination matters. It was my habit to take care that the examination room was fresh and cool. I helped the maid to set the place in order before breakfast, and as soon as the meal was over went to make final arrangements.

It was fifteen minutes past nine. After a final glance round, I was about to hurry from the room to call the pupils when the rustle of Miss Murray's silk and a manly tread accompanying hers warned me that I was late. I stepped towards the door in some vexation at being discovered behindhand, and there confronted Miss Murray with a tall man by her side.

She was in one of her happiest moods; the examiner had not neglected to bring his cap and gown, and this was a point in his favour; for Miss Murray stickled for ceremony and felt slighted if the honours of the university were not accorded. At this moment, however, I only saw him as one sees a shadow; my mind was taken up with my seeming inattention to duty, and I directed a somewhat anxious glance to my superior.

"Quite right, Miss Keith," said she, "we are early. Allow me to introduce our examiner. He expressed a desire to see the room. This will be your table, Mr. Marston. Yonder Miss Keith will sit. Call the pupils, my dear! We will retire to the garden."

I vanished while Miss Murray still flowed on; and soon I had my pupils in their places, and was endeavouring to suppress the rising tumult of inquiries as to the appearance and probable temperament of the examiner—irascible, easy-to-be-entreated, or otherwise.

In the midst of a ripple of whispers, the door opened and he entered the room. Every head was instantly turned, and through the dead silence certainly twenty-five pairs of eyes directed inquisitive glances towards him.

I looked up with the rest, neither inquisitively nor with interest; it was an automatic movement occasioned by the opening of the door and someone's entrance—that was all. My gaze became, however, gradually concentrated. Mr. Marston had a striking face, refined, handsome; in figure he was tall and athletic, and he appeared to be about twenty-eight years of age. But had I not seen him before? No, that was surely impossible; I must be mistaken.

He applied himself at once to the duty of unfastening the bundle

of papers which he carried, and then went down the room handing a list of questions to each pupil in turn. When he reached my end of the room and had delivered the last, he paused for a moment and called out:—

“Half-past nine! The examination will now begin!”

Then he walked back again to his seat.

But that voice! most assuredly I had heard it before. This second impression was one too distinct to be disregarded or set aside. What did it mean? My eyes followed him up the room. I seemed to know beforehand how he would walk. I had some indelible recollection connected with that easy swinging gait.

I looked out of the window, making a mental effort to compel something clearer from my memory. In this attitude I remained some moments, then turned my head sharply and suddenly, and again directed my glance upon Mr. Marston. He was leaning over his table looking steadfastly at me; the gaze I encountered was a singularly penetrating one from a remarkably blue pair of eyes; for one brief second our thoughts were like written sentences one to another. Stay! Was not all this delusion? Had I really encountered his glance at all? Apparently he had not moved a muscle, yet now his eyes certainly were fixed absently over my head on the open window; then they moved—cold, official, vigilant, they passed over and scrutinised the rows of examinees, and then dropped to the papers lying before him on the table. Not a quiver, not a shade of change! Not the faintest ripple of emotion to make it clear to me that our thoughts had indeed met for the moment. I continued to watch him narrowly for a second or two; but he appeared either unaware of or indifferent to my scrutiny.

That afternoon, during the interval between the two examinations, Miss Murray found an opportunity of conveying to me her appreciation of Mr. Marston's bearing.

“Faultlessly polite, my dear, and quite official in his manner, which with girls is very desirable; impresses me as being possessed of unusual power.”

“I think he impresses me in the same way,” I returned.

“There is great refinement about him. Have you observed his peculiarly fine cast of feature?”

I intimated that I had observed it. Miss Murray continued to praise him; she was very much satisfied indeed. I listened and made few responses. When she had gone I spoke from my heart.

“For all this,” I said to myself, “if my recollection is not playing me false, this refined and imposing Mr. Marston is a gigantic fraud. Take away his academic dress and his official, gentlemanly bearing, clothe him shabbily and place him in less prosperous circumstances, and he is nothing less than a common thief—a highway robber—a burglar!”

In my excitement I did not consider the appropriateness of these epithets, but heaped them up in an endeavour to express my sense of

disproportion between the man's seeming appearance and the truth as I thought I knew it. For this accredited university don, and that shabby shameful young man of the past, were they not one and the same? How account for the mystery? Naturally I distrusted and even resented this seeming respectability. But my indignation being spent, I asked myself what course of action I ought to pursue. It was impossible to denounce the man upon mere impressions, some proof must first be found, and I was not without resources. About ten minutes of spare time remained before the afternoon examination began; this interval I spent in writing in to the Bank at Middleford to ask that my envelope containing the four ten-pound Bank of England notes should be sent to me unfailingly by return of post. And then I went down to superintend the examination, and to keep at the same time a watchful eye upon the examiner.

It must be owned that Mr. Marston's manner was exceedingly baffling, the effect being to compel me into an every-day behaviour whether I wished it or not; he was faultlessly indifferent and official. No doubt he saw me, but if his eyes slid over me, if his voice addressed me, it was in a perfectly formal and impersonal way—his bearing being precisely that of the half dozen examiners whom I had encountered on half a dozen previous occasions on this identical business, in this identical room.

So much the better, thought I, when not in his presence; he detects nothing in me to excite surmise.

On the third morning—the last day of the examination—the letter containing the four bank notes duly arrived; and as I was up early and met the postman, no one saw me receive it. Two small circumstances had, meanwhile, added an element of certainty to my surmise. A letter arriving for Mr. Marston showed that his Christian name was "Hubert," and a letter written by him in reply gave me an opportunity of studying his handwriting. I brought down my old registered envelope (which I had kept as a curiosity) and compared the address with that of the letter lying on the hall-table. The writing was very similar—almost the same; the lapse of years might account for the slight difference.

At the same time, my hour and my opportunity having come round, I found my resolution in a tottering state.

Nevertheless I drove on blindly. I carried the bank notes upstairs, placed them in the old registered envelope, and putting that in a new cover, directed the packet to "Hubert Marston, Esq."

The morning examination passed without incident. Our eyes never met; if he looked up, my head was bent over my book; if I looked up it was only when by instinct I had ascertained that he had turned the other way. If his bearing were really an ingenious piece of acting, I flatter myself that mine capped it! I did not think—I *knew* he was unaware that he was recognised.

Throughout those hours my bit of dynamite lay in my pocket.

I turned it over now and then with my hand. It was a profoundly calm day: the scrambling of the pens over the paper, the flapping of a blind, the examination stillness pervading the place, had a soporific effect. Once Mr. Marston cleared his throat rather loudly; I started guiltily, my nerves being quite unhinged by suspense. At dinner I ate little, and afterwards finding myself in the examination room making preparations for the last time, I was in an agony between hesitation and resolve.

The pupils came in and with more noise than usual settled to their places.

I stood irresolute in the gangway. The last moment of my opportunity had arrived; once this was past, I knew unfailingly that I could and should do *nothing*.

A door slammed, and a well-known tread was heard in the passage. My will rose in a last effort; I seized my letter, got to his table, placed it upon the papers, and had reached my own seat before his leisurely step paused at the door.

After that, something like an ague took me. There I sat at my table waiting for my bomb to explode. And there sat Mr. Marston at his with his official air, every now and then glancing over the rows of girls. Had he seen my letter? I calculated that his elbow rested upon it at this moment. His manner affected me cruelly; I experienced violent heart palpitation, and holding on to the table with both hands, began to watch him frankly, disguise and pretence being no longer possible. He moved; yes! his elbow had been on it; he saw it for the first time and took it up with, I fancied, a slight look of surprise. Then he pushed it aside unopened and set to work to write. This writing of his used up three-quarters of the time; he kept to it with assiduity. Meanwhile I experienced torments. At length he pressed the blotting-paper over the writing, at the same time looking round the room with his usual aloof air. It was the last time I was ever to see that expression on his face; the next instant his hand was again upon my letter.

The same slight air of doubt which he had worn before came into his face; he scrutinised the cover, opened it, took out the old registered envelope, and—dropped it on the table snatching back his hands, and staring as though it had been a live serpent!

As for myself, so intense was my sympathy with my fellow-creature in this horrible moment, that my breath would scarcely come, and I forced myself to watch by sheer strength of will. Have you seen a snow-drift gradually change and disperse under the sun's power? Something of that kind began to happen to Mr. Marston's face. The muscles, the fine compact texture, appeared to be passing from his control, the strength and coolness forsook it; slowly, cruelly, the colour altered—first a sickening pallor smote it like a blight, and then a flush deeper and deeper every moment, dyed it from chin to brow. He seemed to have lost consciousness of his surroundings, to forget

that he was watched. Slowly lifting the envelope again, he drew out the four ten-pound notes and spread them before him. Then his head drooped, and an aspect of humiliation, against which he made no effort to contend, settled upon him.

For how many minutes he kept this attitude I do not know. At last he began to raise his head ; but this I could not bear. Instinctively I knew that his eyes would seek mine, and I could not wait to feel those humiliated rays touch me. Rising, I made for the door in blind haste and rushed away from the scene I had created.

III.

I WAS fortunately preserved from the remarks my sudden and quite unsystematic exit from the examination-room would in ordinary times have brought upon me, by an event which threw Miss Murray into so much agitation that she failed to notice the details of anyone's conduct.

One of the girls had been ailing for some few days, and during the hours of this final examination, the doctor had called and pronounced the disease to be scarlatina. Therefore, when Miss Murray met me flying down the passage before the examination was over, she forgot the irregularity of the proceeding, in relief at finding me free to attend to the immediate difficulty.

The thing to be accomplished at once was the clearance of the house from pupils ; so that the rest of the day I was incessantly occupied in helping them to pack and making plans for hurried departures. Miss Murray superintended the isolation of the sick pupil and the arrangements for the nursing, and by dint of the orderliness and efficiency of the establishment we settled everything, and emptied the house before the afternoon of the following day.

It was further planned that Miss Murray, who greatly needed a change, was to proceed at once for her holiday ; and that I, who was glad of the opportunity for quiet study, was to remain.

In the hurry I had not had time to ask a question about the fate of Mr. Marston ; but as I accompanied Miss Murray to the cab and said farewell, she turned back to impart some information.

"As to Mr. Marston, my dear, I hardly know how he left us. I had time to tell him of our misfortune and of the hasty emptying of the house, which was necessary, and to bid him adieu. I fancy he feared the infection, for he himself seemed in a hurry to escape."

"Indeed ?" said I demurely.

It was on the tip of my tongue to tell her the truth. But something restrained me. It was an inopportune time. Why should I burden her with an extra worry just on the eve of her departure ? And what was to be gained by so doing ? The man had gone, and no further danger was to be apprehended. So I wished her a

pleasant vacation, and permitted her to depart without a hint of the truth.

Not more than twenty-four hours were to pass before I sharply regretted my decision.

It was in the evening about seven o'clock. I had had late tea and felt inclined to seize the opportunity of private study. Miss Murray had a writing-table, which was placed in the bow-window of the drawing-room; I had seated myself before it with my books and papers. The bow-window was at one end of the room, the door was at the other. Near me an open window let in the sound of trees gently stirred by a breeze. I had been engrossed in my studies for about an hour, and had reached that point of absorption when sounds become indistinct, when suddenly I was re-called by hearing my own name pronounced behind me.

"Miss Keith!" said a diffident but masculine voice in my ear.

I was startled beyond words; I had not heard anyone enter the room, and thought myself alone. I sprang to my feet with a cry. And if the sound of my own name had alarmed me, the face and figure which I beheld upon turning round, did not re-assure me. For, standing close beside me I found Mr. Marston.

My first feeling was that of simple stupid amazement, and that was followed by general apprehension and then personal fear. The drawing-room was shut off from the rest of the house. A cry would be of no avail unless some one happened to be in the corridor. I was utterly helpless. Together with these thoughts, there came to my mind the recollection that Miss Murray had left me a large sum of money for expenses; and this was at the moment lying in the locked drawer of the writing-table beside me.

I looked round wildly. The space between myself and the bell-rope was, I remarked, free; it was just possible to dart forward and to reach it. I made the attempt, but found myself, before I got near, caught in a strong pair of detaining arms.

This act certainly did not allay my alarm. For a second or two I struggled helplessly, then suddenly I desisted. I gave myself and Miss Murray's interests up for lost, and, with that, felt a strange, fierce anger blaze up in my heart to lend me courage.

"Coward! Coward!" I managed to cry out.

Whereupon the iron hand about me was immediately relaxed.

"Miss Keith, for heaven's sake don't ring the bell and give the alarm! Is it possible that you distrust me?"

As he spoke, he placed himself between me and the bell-rope, and I, thankful to be free, stumbled back a step or two, and leant against the desk.

Mr. Marston stood silently in front of me. His face was the picture of dismay.

"Is it possible," he repeated, "that you distrust me?"

I looked at him in a frenzy of indignation.

"Why! Why!" I cried. "You are a ruffian!"

His eyes fell before mine. "To be sure!" said he, in a low voice. "To be sure! I am a ruffian!"

My courage increased when I saw I was not to be subjected to any fresh attack.

"Have you anyone with you?" I inquired imperatively.

He looked up suddenly, and in the midst of his dismay I was convinced that I caught a gleam of humour in his well-remembered blue eyes.

"No—oh no! On my honour, Miss Keith, I am absolutely alone. You've only got me to deal with, you know!"

He looked down again, adding presently in a low voice:—

"Knock me down, you know, if you can, and if you like. I won't do anything to prevent it again."

"How did you get in?" asked I.

"By the usual way," he returned, again looking up with that gleam of humour in his eyes. "I rang the door-bell, and the servant opened it; and I was shown in here."

"I heard nothing," said I, feeling just the least bit in the world absurd.

"No," said he, "the wind was blowing in over your head from the open window, and you were very much engrossed."

"What have you come for?"

"Well," he said, "to have a little talk with you, if you will be so good as to permit it, and to show you these papers."

"Will you sit down?" said I, very stiffly.

And at last we got upon two chairs opposite to one another. I was still trembling, and still in a blaze of mingled anger and fear. His first action was to take out the old registered envelope from his pocket, and to lay it on his knee, and to look at it with an expression something between ruefulness and tickled humour.

"There is a good deal that wants explanation," said he.

I assented with a movement of the hand.

"I most sincerely ask your pardon for my rudeness just now. I trust I did not hurt you, Miss Keith," he continued with some compunction of tone.

"You can go on," said I, drily, "and never mind me!"

"Certainly," he returned ruefully. "I want first to *prove* to you who I am. Will you read this?"

As he spoke, he stooped to rearrange a bundle of papers he had brought with him. The light was drawing away, and in the dusk he appeared, as he bent over them, a remarkably massive shape. I measured his great shoulders with my eye, and thought of the slightness and smallness of myself, and of my absolute helplessness; while at the same time, as I watched the scholarly movement of his hand amongst the papers, and the refined handsome head leaning above them, a sense of unspeakable perplexity fell upon me.

"Here it is," said he at last, looking up without unembarrassment; "the one I want you to read first, that is. I am going to ask you to be so very good as to look at all these in turn."

So saying he selected one and handed it to me. I accepted it stiffly, and with the conviction that some inconceivable ruse was about to be perpetrated upon me. I read through the document, however, safely; and as soon as I had finished that, he presented me with another. The papers consisted of written and printed proofs that he had spent such and such years at the University of Oxbridge, that he had taken his degree—an honour degree for which he must have read hard—that he had won a fellowship; and that he had ever since been engaged in tuition at his college. In short, I found myself in possession of proofs that he had lived an arduous and virtuous life for the last seven years—from the moment, that is, when he appeared on *my* horizon as a thief, to the present hour!

I laid the last paper aside with a more complete sense of bewilderment than ever. But I was no longer frightened of him. A mere don from a university I could make shift to grapple with.

"Well! Is it satisfactory?" said he eagerly as I returned him the last paper.

I reflected for a moment.

"No," said I, "it is not."

"Not satisfactory!" he repeated with evident disappointment.

"Anything but," I returned.

"I thought you would have believed those papers," said he. "I did not see how you could help it. But you are determined to hang a mill-stone about my neck?"

"Oh dear no!" said I, drily; "nothing of the kind."

"Look here!" said he, bending forward with a confiding air; "of course I am in your power. But I don't believe you are as flinty as you pretend. No I do not, Miss Keith! I shall ever preserve in memory the impression your countenance first made upon me. I shall, in spite of your averted face in this moment, and in spite of the atrociously hard-hearted and persistent way in which you ran me to earth—I shall always connect you with hope, pity, and salvation—after a great despair."

A tone of very deep feeling quivered through the last words. I kept my head turned absolutely aside. No, I would *not* be duped!

"Will you not say something? Will you not, at least, be generous enough to make some remark?" he asked with an impatient sigh.

"Of course," I answered, resolutely discharging from my tones anything but the most metallic hardness, "these papers prove to me that you have spent the last seven years or so in genuine work at the University. They prove nothing more."

"You choose to show me a relentless spirit. And I suppose I deserve it. But I have further proofs with me."

So saying, he produced an ancient-looking newspaper and asked me

to notice the date. The year was that of the incident of the theft, the day and week a few months earlier. The paper was a northern journal. He pointed out a paragraph which I forthwith perused. It was to the effect that Mr. Hubert Marston (nephew of Mr. Albert Marston, a well-known Yorkshire manufacturer and M.P.), had won a scholarship at St. Thomas's College, Oxbridge, and that it was supposed he would end his career at the University in the autumn. The paper added that he had for ten years previously pursued a very satisfactory and steadily rising career at a public school!

That did fairly stagger me. Of all his life there remained only a few months to account for. During those months it was that the robbery at the railway station had occurred. I found myself looking searchingly into the blue eyes which were bent as steadily upon mine.

And in that position we remained for a few seconds. He was the first to speak.

"Do you now believe in me, Miss Keith?" he asked in a low voice.

"No," said I; "I cannot say that. There remains a good deal to be accounted for."

He gave a sigh of disappointment.

"I would give a great deal somehow," said he, "if you would believe in me just on my word. Yes, I would give a good deal."

To this, at first, I made no response. There was something down-cast in his air; he had a troubled look, and I began to conceive in all this matter some great hidden stress of life, some tragical combination of circumstance, which might throw a man once in a way upon a wild act out of consistency with the rest of his nature. It was growing dusk. We had been silent for several minutes. To relieve the situation I rose and struck a match and began to light the candles. Then I approached the window.

"Let me do that!" said he, springing up, and he went to the window and closed and latched it. I meanwhile had my hand on the curtains.

"That also I can do," said he.

He came up to me and took the very fold I was holding. There was something in the common-place action which relieved the embarrassment we had both been feeling. Our fingers met by accident. In a moment his other hand gently pressed my shoulder.

"Miss Keith," said he, "Miss Keith! Only tell me that just on my word you will believe in me. That you will take back that ugly name you called me. That in spite of everything you will say to yourself, 'This man is not a ruffian.'"

I pulled at the curtain.

"You are not really helping me, Mr. Marston," said I cheerily; "please stand out of the way and let me get this well drawn to. Thank you. Now will you sit down again? No. To tell you the honest truth I do *not* think you a ruffian, and even in my moment of

most supreme and righteous anger, I am not at all sure that I really in my heart thought it of you."

"Now," said he, "I can trust you. I can trust you with my story. Will you sit down again and listen to it?"

IV.

"It will be necessary to tell you," began Mr. Marston, "that I was early left an orphan dependent upon an uncle—Mr. Albert Marston—for everything. He owned a prosperous woollen manufactory in Yorkshire and was a member of Parliament. As soon as I was old enough he sent me to a public school. Here I remained for seven years. Among my school-mates was a lad named Rudolf von Halle; I took a fancy to him and the friendship lasted until the evening before I met you at the railway station. From that day to this I have neither seen him nor heard from him.

"Rudolf was the son of a poor German gentleman, and was receiving his education on very low terms through the kindness of the head-master. Although Rudolf returned my liking and was willing enough to pair off with me as my special friend, I soon discovered in his character an impenetrable mystery. Boy as he was, he had a marvellous power of reticence. I have since believed this to have been induced in him by some abnormal circumstance connected with the family history. After a time I became sufficiently intimate with his family to be invited to spend a day or two with them. Their house was a mere cottage, and the *ménage* was carried on with a rigid economy. Nevertheless, I looked forward to these visits. If the food was plain, the conversation had a certain colour which fired my imagination. By degrees I began to think there was something in life much more inspiring than mere duty. Von Halle was, in short, a '*tête exaltée*,' Rudolf partook of the same quality, and I myself became infected by a certain inflation of mind that was morbid, and peculiarly foreign, and which was certain in time to thrust me upon some unusual action.

"But of the von Halle family the person who inspired me with a real enthusiasm of affection was Madame v. Halle. Her gentle, unselfish, and noble character awakened in me all that boyish adoration which I might have spent upon my own mother, had I possessed one; and I still retain in my heart the memory of the deep regard with which I always thought of her.

"Rudolf and I were ambitious students, and at the end of our school career, the head-master sent us up to Oxbridge to compete for scholarships there. We were both successful. I won the first scholarship at St. Thomas's; he won the second. But then arose a difficulty. While Mr. v. Halle was glad enough to have obtained the chance of an university education for his son, my Uncle Albert

saw the matter in a very different light. He destined me for a partnership with himself [he had no son, but only two daughters], and was averse to my spending further time in education or 'throwing myself away upon a literary career.' It ended in a quarrel between us. I left home and, three or four months before my university career could begin, found myself in the world alone and with scarcely a pound that I could call my own. Just at this point, Mr. v. Halle heard of a prospective engagement at M——, the town, that is, where I had the—pleasure, if I may so describe it, of meeting with you, Miss Keith, and hearing of my position, he very kindly suggested my accompanying them there, sharing their house, and seeking some sort of employment for the short time that remained before we went to Oxbridge. Rudolf was to do the same.

"This offer I accepted. We all moved to M—— together, and after tramping the town for a few days I eventually found work as accountant in one of the departments of the stores. This I only obtained because the real accountant was ill at the time. My wages were to be sixteen shillings a week. Rudolf got a situation at ten shillings. It was very meagre, but we saw ourselves in a fair way to exist until the university terms began. But just then an unlooked-for calamity occurred. Mr. von Halle missed getting the work which he had calculated upon, and found himself in a strange town, without a friend, and without the prospect of an income. With my wages and Rudolf's, our weekly income now only amounted to one pound and six shillings. Von Halle had a little, a very little money in hand. Somehow we could manage to keep the wolf from the door. All might yet have been well—all might have come right in time, had it not been for that indefinable *something*.

"The closer intimacy with the von Halles which my living with them involved convinced me that always there was something behind—some mystery in which I was not allowed a participation.

"One day, shortly after our arrival at M——, a stranger called at the house; a stranger, that is, to me. He was shown at once into the small back room; but I chanced to come along the passage at the moment of his arrival, and noticed that he started and put his hand to his face as though not wishing to be seen. Yet I received a clear impression of what he was like. He was a short, slight, but muscular-looking man, very dark, and of that exceedingly foreign cast of feature which we associate with the Tartaric or Mongolian tribes.

"I proceeded into the front room and sat down with a book. Throughout the evening I heard the sound of voices in earnest conversation in the next room. Now and then Madame v. Halle came in, but otherwise I was left to myself. She, I noticed, looked troubled. I had before gathered that the mystery, whatever it was, was distasteful to her, nay, even a serious distress. When night came I retired at my usual hour. Rudolf and I shared the same bedroom. He came upstairs very late, his entrance into the

room partly wakening me. I opened my eyes sleepily to find him standing in the middle of the floor, his hands clenched, his face white, and his eyes flaming with excitement. I was too sleepy to see this more clearly than as in a dream. Next morning I thought it was a dream. Now I know it was nothing of the kind.

"Matters went on in this way for several weeks—poverty and mystery—poverty and mystery. I could have made up my mind to the first, but the second I disliked. It went against my English grain. The visits of the stranger continued, and always, as it seemed, interfered with our domestic peace. I became more and more convinced that Madame v. Halle was rendered exceedingly unhappy by them. And this roused not only my intensest sympathy on her account, but increased my feeling of devotion to her.

"Well! To hasten on to the culminating point! One evening I turned my key in the latch, and entered the house, and came upon a scene which flashed upon my brain and lies there still as indelible and vivid as though I had but beheld it yesterday. The door of the back sitting-room was wide open. I heard Madame v. Halle cry out, and I saw a confused group of men grappling as it were, one with another. There were four men. There were v. Halle, Rudolf, the Mongol, and a strange man whose face I did not see at all. What I did see, was that confused horrible rush and the gleam of a knife savagely uplifted in the air. Whose hand held that knife I do not know. Whether Rudolf v. Halle's, or the Mongol's, I am utterly unable to judge. It was just a flash, no more. Then came a heavy fall, a ghastly cry, the door was banged to, and Madame v. Halle came flying along the passage to fall half fainting into my arms. I had not time to speak, to utter one word of the amazement and bewilderment in which I stood, before she slipped from me and casting herself at my feet, clasped my knees with her arms, and cried to me in a piercing whisper—

"'Save us, Hubert! Save us all! For mercy's sake save us!'

"Mistaking her meaning, I attempted to push past her and to rush to the back sitting-room, supposing my assistance was in some way required. But she seized me and hung with all her weight upon me.

"'Not there, Hubert! Not there!' she cried.

"And just then I heard the key turned in the door and knew I was purposely locked out. Madame v. Halle rose to her feet and tottered to the room, I following. Again I was about to speak, when she rushed forward and laid her hand upon my mouth.

"'Not a word, Hubert!' she whispered. 'Not a word! Sit by me and listen. Don't speak!'

"Pulling me to a seat by her side, and as far from the wall of the other room as possible, she looked into my eyes with the most passionate entreaty I have ever seen in a human face.

"'Do you love me, Hubert?' she asked.

"'Indeed, madame!' I faltered, in the same low whisper.

"'If I were in difficulty, in despair, would you save me and help me?'

"I could only answer by pressing the hand which was to me as my mother's.

"Will you do what I tell you now, do it, and trust me?"

"I vowed I would with an intensity of emotion.

"You have rich friends, Hubert. Get me money. Ten pounds will be enough. *Get me money to escape.* Ask no questions, but go and do it. Creep out of this house now and never return to it. As you love me, promise me that. I will pack your things and have them conveyed to that house close by, in the next street, where you once thought of taking a room. There I will meet you to-morrow morning for the money. Afterwards get a lodging as far away from this neighbourhood as you can. You hear me, Hubert? You understand? And remember you have promised. For me, *it is a matter of life and death!*"

"All this she had whispered into my ear with an intensity of utterance which I cannot describe. Even as she spoke the impossibility of the task she had imposed upon me had risen to my mind. But such was her will, her impetuosity, her distress, that I could not have uttered a word of hesitation had I wished it. There was the task. I must go and perform it. I rose to my feet in silence.

"Just then the dead hush in the next room was broken by a sound; I heard the cautious trampling of feet and the cautious slow drag of something heavy across the floor. A sickening horror seized upon me. Something of it may have shown itself in my face. At any rate Madame v. Halle hurried me to the door, and with one last imperious whisper of 'For my sake!' pushed me over the threshold and out into the street.

"Once out in the open air, confused and horrified though I was, my mind fixed itself upon the thing to be done for the sake of Madame v. Halle, with a resolute exclusion of any too searching thought upon the event. But how to proceed? Madame v. Halle had spoken of my rich friends. Yes; I had rich friends. I had my uncle and his circle. But my old home was on the eastern side of Yorkshire, and what I had to accomplish had to be done before morning. Moreover, I was without money; I had not sixpence about me.

"I began to wander on through the streets, my head down and my thoughts absorbed in agonised scheming. And while each plan in turn was extinguished in despair, the memory of Madame v. Halle's distracted face, passionate entreaties and imperative gestures remained vividly before me. Then night fell. By that time I was sick with hunger and giddy with fatigue, my brain becoming proportionately over-wrought. It was a quiet night; the streets looked strange and unreal in the moonlight. I passed along under the shops until I came to the steps of a great warehouse, and here I sat down. I had been saying over to myself the words: 'Ten pounds! Ten pounds!' with foolish painful reiteration. Suddenly another idea—it came as an

audible voice—sprang up. 'Take the money! Take the money!' went the words. I looked up, startled. The warehouse was owned by one of the richest firms in the city; no doubt there would be a safe inside it and money. I was not ashamed to think about it; on the contrary, a fierce rage and self-contempt blazed up within me because I had neither skill nor strength to break in and steal.

"Then I rose and wandered again until the dawn began to break. And at last I found myself leaning against the door of a station, staring hopelessly at the ground, and reflecting that the time given me was almost up. As I stood there, a cab drove up; a young lady alighted from it. I saw a fresh young girl with a bright colour and gentle brown eyes, a quiet determined mouth and a cool broad forehead. She was dressed all in grey; a look of serenity and happiness shone in her face, and then I said to myself—

"Why not tell your story and make an appeal to one who looks gentle and good, and from whom it would be an honour to receive a benefit?

"The notion cheered my failing courage. I saw the practical difficulties, the unlikelihood of getting a shy, well-bred girl to speak to me at all. Then was she rich? This I thought I could ascertain. I followed her to the booking-office; she opened her purse with the confiding carelessness common to the sex; I looked in and saw a folded bank note. The sight of the money braced me to a sudden wild resolve. I left the office and went on to the platform with the firmest conviction that my moment had arrived, and that I must seize it.

"Well! I carried out my intention. When I opened the carriage door I had no clear notion how I should proceed. Possibly I thought I should speak and throw myself on the fair young girl's mercy. But the strangeness of the face that confronted me, the fear and repugnance in the brown eyes, the inexplicable sharp sense of the *something* that hides heart from heart, and, as far as strangers go, sets us as much apart as though we lived on different planets, sealed my lips. To get an entrance into her interest and pity I needed weeks; I had only moments. The single advantage I possessed over her was the advantage of will. The purse lay on her knee; I saw it, and I saw in her face that the quick mind was moved to resistance and set to danger. And then from some undreamed distance in my nature, the brute, which lies couched side by side with any urgent human need, leapt up—the horrible selfish strength of the stronger.

"I used my muscle to push the slender frightened girl back into her seat, and to snatch the purse which she so helplessly grasped. In all my life since I have never forgotten the dreadful sensation of that moment! It clings like a bad dream. For all that, my will did not go back from its own deed. All my mental powers through excitement, shock, starvation and what not, were in an abnormal condition. The girl was—should be—my willing co-operator; I would force her to understand the money was lent. If I could not, then I would throw

it back to her. But such was the intensity of will which I carried with me in the moment, that I had not a grain of doubt as to the issue, nor did I feel the slightest astonishment when the young girl altered her terrified action, and bent her face towards mine to whisper in her fresh musical voice :—‘ Eleanor Keith, Rose Villa, Middleford.’

“Did you suffer, Miss Keith, when the train carried you safely away from your persecutor? I was as one walking on air! I put your address in my note-book and hurried back to the room which Madame v. Halle had taken for me. Here I awaited her arrival, and my waiting was not for long. She came into my room closely veiled and shut and locked the door. Then she lifted her veil and looked at me. Shall I ever forget the agony of suspense in her corpse-like face? I thrust the ten-pound note into her hand without a word. And then she sank down upon a chair and broke out with terrific sobs. I knelt beside her endeavouring to console her.

“‘Madame v. Halle,’ I asked, ‘what is it? Can I help you further? Be assured of my wish to do so.’

“She controlled herself instantly and drew the veil again about her.

“‘Yes, one thing,’ she said; ‘vow that you will never seek to find us out again, that you will not permit a question about us to pass your lips. Accept my eternal gratitude—and farewell.’

“So saying she rose suddenly from her seat and escaped from the door before I could say a word. By this time it was getting towards the hour when I should be at my work. I had not tasted food since one o’clock the preceding day. I opened the little purse again and looked in with an odd sense of reverence and tenderness. There were a few shillings left.

“And so I went out and bought food with your money, Miss Keith. But food, and a day’s honest work, and a good night’s rest, brought back my feeling to a normal condition, and I began to realise what you might be in reality experiencing, and with that myself to suffer an agony of shame and remorse. Then I set myself to earn the money back for you—to earn, if possible, double, treble the amount. I had some literary talent, and I began to write a story in my leisure moments. But all my efforts could not have procured me so large a sum as fifty pounds in six weeks’ time. More than that sum came however, into my possession unexpectedly. One of my cousins, whose kindly heart was moved at the idea of the privations I was undergoing, saved the amount of sixty pounds out of her ample allowance, and surreptitiously sent it to me. Shortly after I had dispatched the letter and bank notes to you, my university career began, and now, in the present time, I am earning a good income.”

Mr. Marston’s story had come to an end. He paused and looked at me with a smile hovering about the corners of his lips.

“I can tell you, Miss Keith,” said he, “that the first time I managed to see the *humorous* side to the event was one fine day when, to my unspeakable dismay, I found myself seated in an

examination room face to face with the only person upon whom I ever attempted a violent robbery."

"Then you *did* recognise me?" said I, drawing a deep breath.

"Certainly I recognised you," he replied; "your face was indelibly engraved upon my memory, and also your voice."

"But were you aware, Mr. Marston, that I had recognised you?" I asked.

"Not at all," said he; "I flattered myself that I presented too great a contrast to that shabby and despairing youth of by-gone days. It appears that I was mistaken, and that, after all, you were the better actor of the two."

"But the von Halles," I questioned; "did you never hear? Did you never know the meaning of that event?"

"Never," said he; "not a word from that morning to this! I watched the papers narrowly, but could find no reference that would explain what had happened. Six months afterwards I passed down the street where we had lived, and saw that the house had been deserted."

"But you conjecture something?"

"I do. I conjecture murder or attempted murder; but by whom and on whom I cannot tell. I believe the whole mystery to have had a political signification. The von Halles were closely connected with and deeply interested in Russia. I conjecture that one or other of the strangers was discovered to be a spy, that the von Halles had secrets of importance, and that the attack was in a moment of frenzy or in self-defence. It is all pure conjecture, Miss Keith; but that year was a time of great activity amongst the secret societies of the Continent, and was followed by a notorious crime in the spring."

He rose, as he spoke, and approached me. I rose also, feeling that the interview was at an end.

"There is one piece of your stolen property that I still keep," said he. "I hope you will not demand that back."

So saying, he drew from his pocket my old purse and held it out to me.

"I have carried it about ever since," he added. "Am I now to restore it?"

"Keep it," said I.

"There is one thing more," said he. "You have had my full confession, will you give me your forgiveness?"

For answer I put my hand into his and looked in his face, not caring any longer to conceal that my eyes were full of sympathetic tears.

"And will you allow me to visit you again?" asked he.

"Indeed I will," I returned; "but have you not ended your confessions yet?"

"Possibly not," said he.

* * * * *

When a year afterwards Hubert and I visited my old home on our wedding tour, I shall not forget the comical look with which my husband sought my sympathy when Aunt Barbara undertook to give him an account of "Eleanor's inexplicable adventure."

MR. CASTONEL.

BY THE LATE MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE,"

CHAPTER VII.

A WEDDING PEAL.

A GENIAL Christmas-eve, bright and frosty, and merrily blazed the fire in a comfortable kitchen of one of the best houses in a country village. It was the residence of the surgeon, and he was out on his wedding tour, having just espoused his third wife.

They were expected home that night, and preparations for the following day's feast were being actively presided over by the housekeeper, Mrs. Muff, a staid, respectable personage, much above the grade of a common servant. She was very busy, standing at the table, when the surgeon's tiger (we must still call him so, though he had recently assumed the garb of a footman) came into the kitchen, drew a chair right in front of the great fire, and sat down, as if he meant to roast himself.

"John," said Mrs. Muff, "I'll trouble you to move from there."

John sat on, without stirring.

"Do you hear?" repeated the housekeeper. "I want to come to the fire every minute, and how can I do so, with you planted there?"

"What a shame it is!" grumbled John, drawing himself and his chair away, for he was completely under the dominion of Mrs. Muff. "Whoever heard of cooking a dinner the night afore you want to eat it?—except the pudding."

"I must put things forward, and do what can be done: there will be too much left for to-morrow, even then, with all the Chavasses dining here. For I don't stop away from morning service on Christmas-day for anyone. I never did yet, and I'm not going to begin now."

The tiger screwed up his mouth, as if giving vent to a long whistle: taking care that no sound of it reached the ears of Mrs. Muff.

"You can take the holly and dress the rooms. Saving enough, mind, for the kitchen. And then, John, you can lay the cloth in the dining-room, and carry in the tea-things."

"There's lots of time for that," returned John.

"It has struck eight, and Mr. Castonel's letter said nine. Do as I bid you."

She was interrupted by the sound of young voices, rising in song, outside.

"There's another set!" cried John, indignantly. "That makes the third lot we have had here to-night."

"When they have finished, you may look out and bring me word how many there are," said Mrs. Muff.

John left the kitchen, his arms full of holly and evergreen. Presently he came back.

"There's no less than five of them little devils."

Mrs. Muff, with a stern reprimand, dived into her pockets, and brought forth five halfpence. "Give them one apiece, John."

"If it was me, now, as was missis, instead of you, I should favour 'em with a bucket of water from a up-stairs window," was John's response, as he ungraciously took the halfpence. "They'll only go and send others. Suppose master and missis and the new carriage should just drive up, and find them rascallions a squeaking round the door!"

"Christmas would not be Christmas without its carols," returned Mrs. Muff. "I remember, the first winter you were down here, you came on the same errand to old Mr. Winnington's, and got a mince-pie and a penny out of me."

"Ah," replied John, "but I was a young donkey then."

It was past ten when the carriage rolled up to the door. John flew to open it, and Mrs. Muff, in her black silk gown and white apron, stood in the hall, drawing on her leather mittens. Frances, Mrs. Castonel, happy and blooming, sprang from the carriage and entered her new home. Mrs. Muff led the way to the dining-room. It looked bright and cheering, with its large fire, its blazing lamps, and well-spread table, half supper, half tea. "I will go up-stairs first," said the young bride, "and take these wraps off."

Mr. Castonel came in, a slight man of middle height, scarcely yet five-and-thirty, and the tiger followed him. "Well, John," said he, "how has Mr. Rice got on with the patients?"

"Pretty well, sir. None of 'em be dead, and some be well. But they have been a grumbling."

"Grumbling! What about?"

"They say if a doctor gets married, he has no right to go away like other folks, and that this is the third time you have served 'em so. It was gouty old Flockaway said the most. He have had another attack; and he was so cranky Mr. Rice wouldn't go anigh him, and he can't abear Mr. Tuck."

The surgeon laughed. "What's coming in for tea, John?"

"Some muffins, sir. And Mrs. Muff says she knows as that will be one of the best tongues you have cut into."

"Bring tea in at once. It is late."

As the tiger withdrew, Mrs. Castonel entered. Her husband's arms were open to receive her. "Oh, Gervase," she exclaimed, "how kind of you to have everything in such beautiful order for me!"

"Welcome, a thousand times welcome to your home, my love!" he whispered. "May it ever appear to you as bright as it does now!"

Loving words; loving manner! But, alas! they had been proffered before, with the same apparently earnest sincerity: once to Caroline Hall, and again to sweet Ellen Leicester.

"If you don't send in them muffins, ma'am, without further delay, master says he'll know the reason why," was the tiger's salutation to Mrs. Muff.

She was buttering them, and listening to Hannah's account of the journey, for she had attended Mrs. Castonel. She turned to give him the plate, but stopped and started, for the church bells had rung out a joyous peal.

"It cannot be midnight!" she exclaimed.

"Midnight!" sarcastically echoed the tiger. "It wants a good hour and a half o' that. There's the clock afore you."

"Then what possesses the bells?"

"Well, you be rightly named," returned the tiger, "for you *be* a muff, a out-and-outer. Them bells is for master and missis; not for Christmas, I know. The ringers is sitting up, and heerd the carriage rattle up the street. Hark, how they are a clapping the steam on! They'll think to get a double Christmas-box from master."

Just before Mr. Castonel went to his room that night the bells again struck out. They were ringing-in Christmas. He stood and listened to them, a peculiar expression in his unfathomable eyes, his passionless face, whose emotions were so completely under control. Was he speculating upon what the next year should bring forth ere those Christmas bells should again sound? The next year! The clock struck out: he counted its strokes: Twelve! Then he took his candle and went up-stairs. And the bells began again.

"A merry Christmas to you, Frances," he said, as he entered the chamber; "a merry Christmas, and many of them."

"Thank you," she laughed. "I think it must be a good omen to receive these wishes the moment it comes in."

Whilst she was speaking, a loud summons was heard at the house door. It was a messenger for Mr. Castonel, from one of his best patients. He hurried out, and Mrs. Castonel composed herself to sleep.

A singular dream visited Mrs. Castonel. She thought she was sporting in her girlhood's days, in her father's large old garden, with her companions, Caroline Hall and Ellen Leicester. How gay they were, how *happy*: for the sense of present happiness was greater than ever Frances had experienced in reality; ay, although she had married where she passionately loved. They were dressed as if for a rejoicing, all in white, but the materials of her own attire appeared to be of surpassing richness. A table, laid out for feasting, was lighted by a lamp; but a lamp that gave a most brilliant and unearthly light, overpowering the glare of day. The table and lamp in her own

dining-room that night had probably given the colouring to this part of her dream. The garden was not exactly like her father's, either ; in form alone it bore a resemblance to it ; it was more what Frances had sometimes imagined of Eden : flowers, birds, light, and the sensation of joyous gladness, all were too beautiful for earth. The banquet appeared to be waiting for them, whilst they waited the presence of another. He came ; and it was Gervase Castonel. He advanced with a smile for all, and beckoned them to take their places at table. A fierce jealousy arose in Frances's heart : what business had he to smile upon the others ? But, imperceptibly, the others were gone, without Frances having noticed the manner of their departure. The old happiness came back again ; the ecstatic sense of bliss in the present ; and she put her arm within his, to walk round that lovely garden. Then she remembered her companions, and asked Mr. Castonel where they had gone. He said he would show her ; and, approaching a door in the hedge, pushed it open. Frances looked out, and the fearful contrast to the lovely spot she had quitted, struck the most terrifying agony to her breast ; for, beyond, all was utter darkness. She shrank back with a shudder, but Mr. Castonel, with a fiendish laugh, pushed her through, and a voice called out, "To your doom ! to your doom !" If *his* voice, it was much altered. Frances awoke with the horror, but the most heavenly music was sounding in her ears ; so heavenly, that it chased away her terror, and she thought herself again in that happy garden.

She half opened her eyes ; she was but half awake, and still were heard the strains of that sweet music. Had she gone to sleep, and awakened in heaven ? for surely such music was never heard on earth. The thought occurred to her in her half-conscious state. The music died away in the air, and Frances sat up in bed, and rubbed her eyes, and wondered ; and just then Mr. Castonel returned. "What is it ?" she cried, bewildered ; "what is it ?"

"The Waits," replied Mr. Castonel. "What did you think it was, Frances ?"

"Only the Waits !" And then, with a rushing fear, came back the dreadful part of her ominous dream ; and she broke into sobs and strove to tell it him.

But these night-terrors pass away with the light of day : sometimes pass and leave no sign, even in remembrance.

The heads and eyes of Ebury were turned towards a gay and handsome chariot that went careering down the street, attended by its coachman and footman. A lady and gentleman were in it, she in brilliant attire : Mr. and Mrs. Castonel were returning their wedding visits. It stopped at the gate of the rectory.

"Don't stay long, Frances," he whispered to her. "I always feel frozen into stone when I am in the presence of those two old people."

Mrs. Castonel smiled, and sailed into the rectory drawing-room in

all her finery ; but she really did, for a moment, forget her triumph, when she saw the saddened look of poor Mrs. Leicester, and the mourning robes still worn for Ellen. Mrs. Leicester had not paid, as it was called, the wedding visit ; she had felt unequal to it ; her card and an apology of illness had been her substitutes. Frances sat five minutes, and from thence the carriage was ordered to her old home. It encountered Mr. Hurst : he took off his hat, and the red colour flushed his cheek. Frances alone returned his bow.

Mrs. Chavasse was in no pleasant temper. She was grumbling at her husband, because he had kept dinner waiting. He was standing before the fire, in his velveteen coat and leather gaiters, warming his frostbitten hands.

"I can't help it," said he. "If I were to neglect Lord Eastberry's business he would soon get another steward, and where would you all be then? You have been making calls, I suppose, Frances."

"Only at the rectory, papa."

Mr. Chavasse turned sharply round from the fire, and faced his daughter.

"The rectory ! In that trim !"

Frances felt annoyed. "What trim ? What do you mean, papa ?"

"I should have gone in a quiet way, to call there," returned Mr. Chavasse. "Gone on foot, and left some of those gewgaws and bracelets at home. You might have stepped in and taken a quiet cup of tea with them : anything like that sort."

"In the name of wonder, what for?" sharply spoke up Mrs. Chavasse. "Frances has gone just as I should have gone."

Mr. Chavasse did not continue the subject. "Will you stay and take some dinner, Frances?"

"And find it half cold," interposed Mrs. Chavasse.

"I would not stay for the world, papa. I have other calls to make and Emily Lomax is coming to dine with me afterwards, that we may lay down the plans for my ball. It will be such a beautiful ball, papa : the best ever given in Ebury."

"Mind you have plenty of wax-lights, Frances," advised her mother.

"Oh, I shall have everything ; lights, and hot-house plants, and champagne in abundance. Gervase let's me have it all my own way."

"Do not begin that too soon," said Mr. Chavasse, nodding at his son-in-law.

"Where's the use of contradiction?" laughed the surgeon, as they rose to leave :

"For when a woman will, she will, you may depend on't,
And when she won't she won't ; and there's an end on't."

Frances Castonel was just then the envy of Ebury, at least of all who considered ease and gaiety the only happiness of life. Parties at home, parties abroad ; dress, jewels, equipage, show ; not a care

clouded her countenance, not a doubt of the future fell on her mind ; and the shadows, of those who were gone, haunted her not.

One wet day, at an early hour, when she was not likely to meet other visitors, Mrs. Leicester called. She had thought, by delay, to gain composure ; but it failed her ; and, after greeting Frances, she hid her face in her hands, and burst into bitter tears.

"You must forgive me, Frances," she sobbed. "The last time I entered this house it was for the purpose of seeing my child in her coffin."

Frances felt dreadfully uncomfortable, wondering what she could say, and wishing the visit were over. As ill-luck would have it, she had been hunting in a lumber closet that morning, and had come upon a painting and two drawings, done by the late Mrs. Castonel. One of them bore her name in the corner, "Ellen Castonel." Frances had carried them down in her hand, and put them on the table, wishing, now, she had put them in the fire instead.

"These are poor Ellen's," exclaimed Mrs. Leicester, as her eye fell on them. "She did them just before her death. I have wondered what became of them, but did not like to ask. Would you mind giving me one, Frances? This with her name on it: it is her own writing."

"All, take them all, dear Mrs. Leicester."

"I would thankfully do so, but perhaps Mr. Castonel values them."

"Indeed, no," answered Frances, with inexcusable want of consideration ; "you may be sure he has never looked at them since they were done. I rummaged them out of an old lumber closet this morning."

Mrs. Leicester took the drawings in silence, and then took the hand of Frances. "I am but a poor hand at compliments now," she murmured, "but I entreat you to believe, Frances, that you have my best wishes for your welfare, as sincerely as I wished it for my own child. May you and Mr. Castonel be ever happy."

About this time rumours began to be circulated in Ebury that a medical gentleman, who was formerly in practice in it, was about to return.

"You had better take care of your p's and q's," cried old Flockaway one day to Mr. Rice. "If it's true that Ailsa is coming back, I wouldn't give a hundred a year for the practice that will be left for Mr. Castonel."

"How so?" demanded the assistant-surgeon, who had been a stranger to the place when Mr. Ailsa was in it. "Mr. Castonel is liked here."

"Liked in other folks' absence," groaned old Flockaway, who was a martyr to gout. "He has had nobody to oppose him, so has had full swing. But just let Ailsa come, and you'll see. All Ebury will tell you that Castonel is not fit to tie his shoe-strings."

"I suppose there is room for both of them."

"There'll be more room for one than the other," persisted the martyr. "If a royal duke came and set up doctoring here he'd get no custom against Ailsa."

The news proved true; and Mr. Ailsa and his family arrived at his house, which had been let during his absence. An unassuming, gentlemanlike man, with a placid countenance. "Little Tuck," his usual appellation, an undersized little fellow with a squeaking voice, who had once been an apprentice under Mr. Ailsa, was the first to run in to see him.

"We are all so glad to see you back, sir," he said, insensibly falling into his old, respectful mode of speech. "Mrs. Ailsa is looking well too."

"I am well," she answered. "No more need of foreign climates for me. But you must have plenty of news to tell us about Ebury."

"Oh, law!" echoed little Tuck. "I shan't know where to begin. First of all, I am living here. Second assistant to Mr. Castonel."

"You had set up for yourself in Brenton when I left," observed the surgeon.

"Yes, but it didn't answer," replied Mr. Tuck, with a doleful look. "I'm afraid I kept too many horses. So I thought the shortest way would be to cut it, before any smash came; and I sold off and came over here, and hired myself out to Mr. Castonel."

"He has played a conspicuous part in Ebury, has he not, this Mr. Castonel?"

"Yes, he has. He came dashing down here from London, with a cab and a tiger and two splendid horses; and got all the practice away from poor old Winnington, and married his niece against his will. When Mr. Winnington died, folks said it was of a broken heart."

"And then she died, did she not?" said Mrs. Ailsa.

"She did. Mr. Castonel's next move was to run away with Ellen Leicester. And she died."

"What did they die of?" asked the doctor,

"I can't tell you," replied Mr. Tuck. "I asked Rice one day, and he said he never knew; he could not make it out. They had both been ill but were recovering, and went off suddenly in convulsions. And now he has married Frances Chavasse."

"I should have felt afraid to risk him," laughed Mrs. Ailsa.

"Oh, was she though!" responded the little man. "She and her mother were all cock-a-hoop over it, and have looked down on Ebury ever since. They'll hardly speak to me in the street. Frances served out poor Hurst, I'm afraid. I know he was wild after her."

"Who is Hurst?"

"The curate. Poor Mr. Leicester is no longer able to take the duty. Ellen's running away with Mr. Castonel nearly did him up, and her death finished it. I fear he is on his last legs."

"What sort of a man is this Mr. Castonel? Do you like him?"

"I don't. I don't understand him."

"Not understand him?"

"I don't," repeated Mr. Tuck, with a very decided shake of the head. "I don't understand him. He has a look of the eye that's queer. I wish you would take me on as assistant, Mr. Ailsa. I'd come to you for the half he gives me. You'll get plenty of practice back. People will be glad to return to you; for, somehow, Mr. Castonel has gone down in favour. They talk more about that strange woman."

Mr. Ailsa looked up. "What are you speaking of?"

"Well, when Mr. Castonel first came down here she followed him, and brought a maid with her, and she has lived ever since in Beech Lodge, Squire Hardwick's gamekeeper's, formerly."

"Who is she?"

"There's the puzzle. She is young, and very handsome, and quite a lady. Mr. Castonel gives out that it's a relation. He goes to see her, but nobody else does."

"Curious!" remarked Mr. Ailsa.

"By the way, you remember Mary Shipley, ma'am?"

"Yes, indeed," returned Mrs. Ailsa. "Mary was a good girl. I would have taken her abroad with me, if she could have left her father."

"Lucky for her if you had, ma'am," was the blunt rejoinder of Mr. Tuck, "for she has gone all wrong."

"Gone wrong! Mary?"

"And Mr. Castonel gets the blame. But he is a sly fellow, and some people think him a lamb. Mary tells nothing, but she appears to be sinking into a decline."

"I am grieved to hear this," returned Mrs. Ailsa. "Her mother was nurse at the Hall when we were children, and she named Mary after me."

"It appears to me," observed Mr. Ailsa, arousing himself from a reverie, "that your friend Mr. Castonel has not brought happiness to Ebury, take it for all in all."

"He has brought plenty of unhappiness and plenty of death," replied Mr. Tuck. "I don't say it is his fault," added the little man, "but it's certainly his misfortune."

"What a row there is, over this Ailsa!" exclaimed Mr. Castonel as he sat down that same night with his wife. "Tuck looked in just now, dancing mad with excitement, because 'Mr. Ailsa was come, and he had been in to see him.' Who is Ailsa, pray?"

"You know, Gervase; you have often heard of him lately," replied Mrs. Castonel, answering the letter rather than the spirit of his words. "Every one is saying he will take your practice from you; even mamma thinks he will prove a formidable rival."

"What is there in him to be formidable?" slightly returned Mr. Castonel. "I'll sew him up, Frances, as I did old Winnington."

"If you mean to imply ruin by 'sewing-up,' I think not," laughed Mrs. Castonel. "He has a large fortune, and his wife is connected with half the great people of the county. She was Miss Hardwick of the Hall, and the nicest girl in the world."

The popular opinion as to Mr. Ailsa's success was not groundless: for of eighteen patients who fell ill in the next three weeks, counting rich and poor, seventeen of them went to Mr. Ailsa, though he never solicited a single case.

How the world would get on without gossip few people can tell. One day Mrs. Major Acre, who was by no means a taciturn or a cautious woman, paid a visit to Mrs. Castonel. "Now, my dear," she said to Frances, "I should recommend Mr. Castonel to call Ailsa out."

Frances glanced at her with an amused look. "Oh, the patients will come back to my husband. They will not all remain with James Ailsa."

"I don't mean that," returned Mrs. Major Acre. "Some stupid people have gone over to him, but you can't call a man out for the caprices of others. No, my dear. But James Ailsa has made very free remarks upon your husband."

"Indeed!"

"It seems Mrs. Ailsa has wormed out of Mary Shipley who it was that led her into mischief—you know the Hardwicks always took an interest in those Shipleys—and Mary has confessed to Mrs. Ailsa what she never would to any one else."

"And who was it?" asked Frances.

"Mr. Castonel."

A vivid fire rushed into the cheeks of Frances.

"And I hear Ailsa declares that, had he been in Ebury at the time, he should have taken upon himself to bring Mr. Castonel before the justices for it. They have forbidden her to let him go there any more."

"He does not go there," cried Frances, vehemently.

"I wouldn't take an oath one way or the other, but if he does, child, he wouldn't be likely to tell you," observed the senseless old lady. "There's no answering for men. My dead husband had a saying of his own, that he was fond of treating his brother officers to, 'Do anything you like, boys, but never let the women know it.' Meaning us wives, my dear."

Frances sat as one stupefied.

"And now I am going on to your mamma's, and——"

"Oh, pray do not say anything of this to mamma," interrupted Frances, rising in excitement. "She would write word to papa, and—— Pray do not, Mrs. Acre!"

"As you please, child. If I don't, other people will. It's known all over Ebury."

When Mr. Castonel entered, Frances met him with passion.

"You have deceived me throughout!" she cried—"you have deceived papa! And rather than be a dupe, I would leave you and go home to live again. Papa would not let me remain here. I know his sentiments. He spoke to me about this very subject, and begged me not to marry you till it was cleared up. I will not remain here."

Mr. Castonel looked, as the saying is, taken by storm. "What on earth is the matter, Frances? I am guilty of no deceit."

"Equivocation will only make matters worse. Oh, I shall go mad! I shall go mad! To think that people should be able to say the same of me that they did of Caroline Hall and Ellen Leicester!"

Mr. Castonel's countenance flushed red, and then became deadly pale. He faltered forth, rather than spoke—"And what did they say of Caroline and Ellen?"

"That you neglected them for others."

"Oh!" The perfectly negligent tone of the ejaculation, and the relieved and half mocking face, did not tend to calm the anger of Mrs. Castonel.

"I know the truth now about Mary Shipley. It has been disclosed to me to-day. Papa questioned you on that report himself, and you denied that there was any truth in it."

"There was no truth in it," was the calm reply of Mr. Castonel. "Why did you not tell me what you meant before exciting yourself thus, Frances? I could have reassured you."

We will leave Mr. Castonel to his reassuring, merely observing that he did succeed in his task; and so fully, that his wife was ready to go down on her knees for having doubted him. Verily he possessed some subtle power, did Mr. Castonel.

June came in, and strange, strange to say, news went out to Ebury of the illness of Mrs. Castonel. Strange, because her symptoms were the same as those which had attacked Mr. Castonel's first and second wives, destroying prospects of an heir.

Mrs. Chavasse arrived in hot haste. Frances laughed at her perturbation. "You have sent for Mr. Ailsa, of course," said Mrs. Chavasse.

"Mr. Ailsa shall attend no wife of mine," was the determined rejoinder of the surgeon. "I'll see him in his coffin first."

"Listen, Mr. Castonel. You have lost two wives; it may have been through negligence in not having good advice; I know not. You shall not lose my daughter if I can prevent it. Not an hour shall go over without further advice."

"Call in any medical man you please, except Ailsa," said Mr. Castonel. "I should wish it done."

"You have taken a prejudice against him," retorted Mrs. Chavasse. "None are so desirable, because he is on the spot."

"Ailsa shall never darken my doors. I will send an express to the county town for one or other of the physicians. Which will you have?"

"Dr. Wilson," answered Mrs. Chavasse. "And meanwhile let Mr. Rice come in."

So it was done. Mr. Rice paid a visit to Mrs. Castonel, and declared she was in no danger whatever.

"I hope not," said Mrs. Chavasse. "I think not. But past events are enough to terrify me."

"True," assented Mr. Rice.

Dr. Wilson came in the course of the day. "No danger," he said; just as Mr. Rice had done.

The following day, however, Mrs. Castonel was worse; and, the day after that, her life was despaired of. Her own state of excitement contributed to the danger. She woke up that morning from a doze, and whether she had dreamt anything to terrify her was uncertain, but she started up in bed, her eyes glaring wildly. Mr. Castonel was then alone with her.

"Oh, Gervase, I am in danger! I know I am in danger!"

"My dear, no." For of course it was his duty to soothe her. "Calm yourself, Frances."

"Oh, she cried, clasping him in deep distress, "can I be going to die? Must I indeed follow Ellen Leicester? I who have thought nothing of death—who deemed it so far off!"

"Be quiet, Frances; I insist upon it," he angrily exclaimed. "You will do yourself incalculable mischief."

"*What will my doom be?* Gervase, do you remember my dream? What have I done that I should be cut off in the midst of my happiness? But not without warning. That dream was my warning, and I neglected it!"

"Frances——"

"Yet what had they done, Caroline and Ellen? Oh, Gervase, save me! what will you do without me? Save me, save me! Let not this terrible fate be mine."

Mr. Castonel strove to hold her still, but she shook terribly; and as to stopping her words, he might as well have tried to stem a torrent in its course.

"The grave! the grave! the grave for *me*! I who have lived but in pleasure!"

"My dear Frances, what are you raving about? If you have lived in pleasure, it has been innocent pleasure."

"Oh, yes, innocent in itself. If I had but thought of God with it, and striven to please Him; and I never did! *There* lay the sin; not in the pleasure. Oh, save me! Fetch Dr. Wilson. I must not die."

They calmed her after awhile, and for a day or two her life hung upon a thread. Then she began to get slowly better. But they were anxious faces still, those around her bedside, her husband's, her mother's, good old Mrs. Muff's; for they remembered it was when they were apparently recovering, that the first and the second Mrs.

Castonel had died. A few more days, and Frances sat up in her dressing-room, gay as ever. All danger was really over, and Mrs. Chavasse returned home.

"Gervase," she said, taking her husband's hand, "how foolish I was to frighten myself!"

"Ay, you were, Frances. But you would not listen to me then, when I told you so."

"I may go into the drawing-room to-morrow, and see visitors, may I not?"

"To be sure you may."

"Then ring the bell, please. I must send Hannah to order me a very pretty cap."

It was Mrs. Muff who answered it, not Hannah. Mr. Castonel left the room as she came in.

"I am to go into the drawing-room to-morrow," said Mrs. Castonel. "Do you know it?"

"Yes, ma'am. I heard Mr. Rice say you might."

"And admit visitors."

"I did not hear him say that, but I should think there's no reason against it," replied the housekeeper.

"So I'll tell you what I want done," added Mrs. Castonel.

"Hannah must go to the milliners' and desire them to send me some afternoon caps, to choose one from. If they have none ready they must make me one. Something simple and elegant. Shall I have it trimmed with white or pink?"

Mrs. Muff thought pink, as her mistress was just now so pale.

"Yes, pink; nothing suits my complexion so well as pink," cried Frances, all her old vanity in full force. "Send Hannah immediately. I am impatient to try it on."

The cap came, but not until night, and Frances had a glass brought to her, and sat figuring off before it, declaring she had never looked so well: if she were but a little older, she would take to caps for good. Mr. Castonel looked on, and laughed at her.

"It is getting time for you to be in bed, Frances," he said. "You must not presume too much upon your recovery."

"I am not tired in the least," she replied. "I will not go until I have had my supper. I never felt better."

"Do you know who they say is dying?" he resumed.

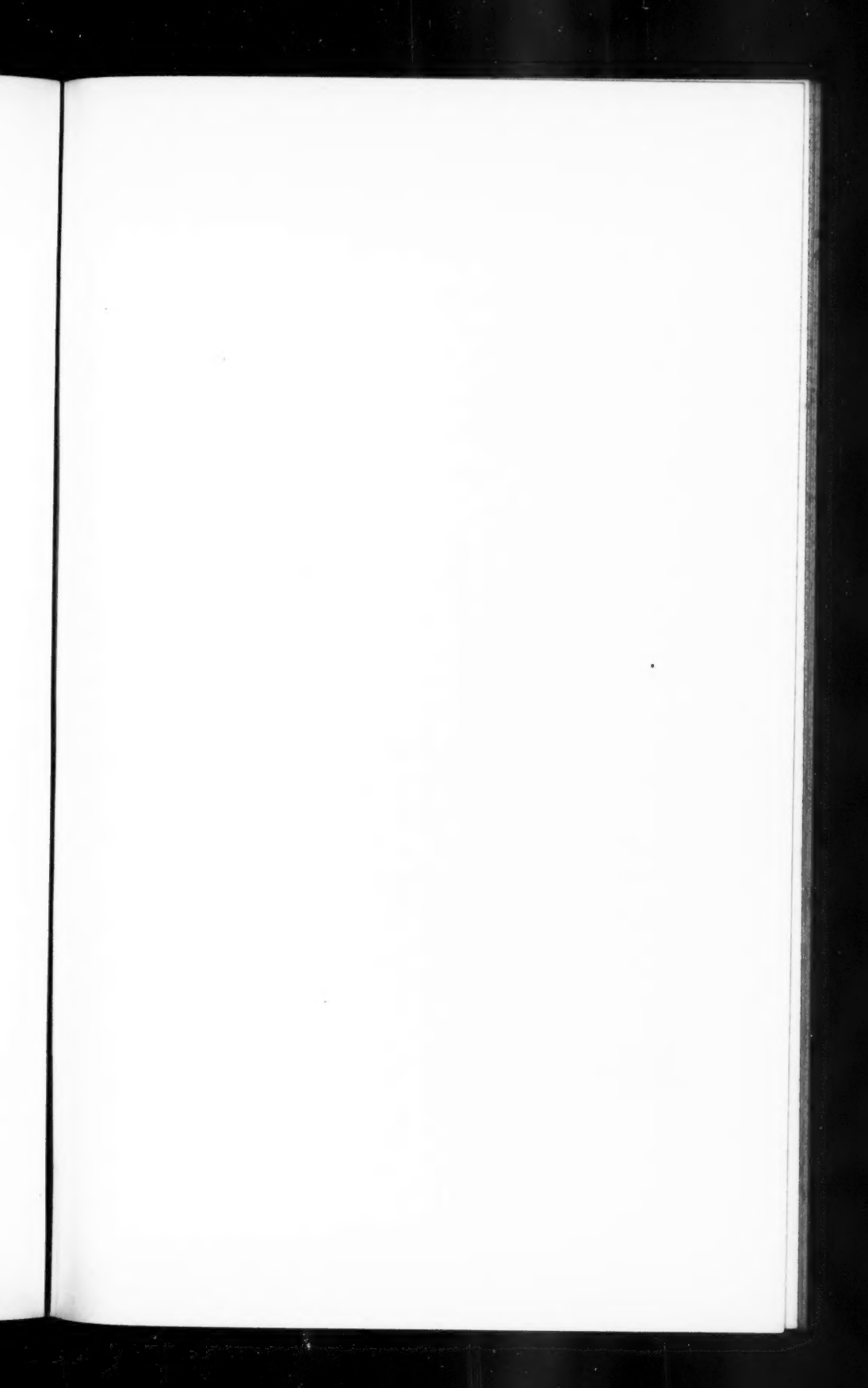
"No."

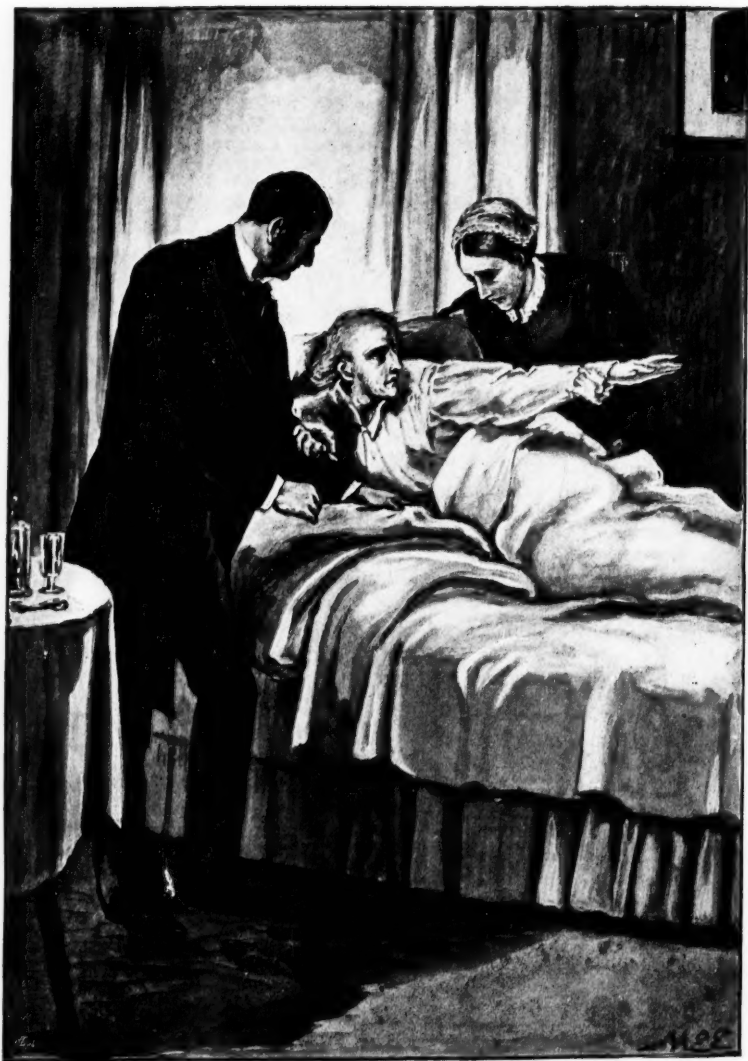
"Mr. Leicester."

"Mr. Leicester!"

"It is thought to be his last night. So, I hear, is the opinion of his friend and chum, Ailsa."

Mrs. Castonel did not like the tone. "Poor man! poor Mr. Leicester!" she sighed. "Well, they have had their share of sorrow. How papa and mamma would have grieved for me: I have thought of it since my illness: and we are many of us, whilst Ellen was their





WITH A SHARP CRY, THE RECTOR STRUGGLED UP IN BED.

only child. I wonder who will have the living. I hope it will be some nice social young parson."

"I hope it will be anybody rather than Mr. Hurst," said the surgeon, spitefully.

"What happy days we shall have together again, Gervase!" she went on. "What should you have done if I had died?"

"The best I could," answered Mr. Castonel.

At that moment Mrs. Muff came in with a light supper for her mistress, and remained with her while she took it, Mr. Castonel descending to his laboratory. As she was carrying down the waiter again, a ring came to the door-bell, and John brushed past to answer it.

"Mr. Castonel at home?"

"Safe and sound," was the tiger's rejoinder, for the applicant was a page in buttons of his acquaintance.

"Then he must come as fast as he can pelt to missis. She's in a fit."

"You are wanted at Mrs. Major Acre's directly, sir," said John, hastily entering the laboratory. "She's took in a fit."

Mr. Castonel had taken out one of the little drawers—to John's amazement. For the lad had always believed that particular drawer to be a sham drawer. There appeared to be a paper or two in it, and a phial. The latter the surgeon held in his hand, and in reply to the message he muttered something, which, to John's ears, sounded very like strong language.

"I never knew, sir, as that drawer opened. I——"

"Begone!" thundered Mr. Castonel, turning on his servant a look so full of evil, that the young man bounded backwards some yards.

"Am I to go anywhere?" he stammered, not understanding.

"Go out and find Mr. Rice," raved his master. "Send him to Mrs. Acre's."

Scarcely had John departed, when there came a second messenger for Mr. Castonel. "If he did not go at once, Mrs. Major Acre would be dead." Thus pressed, he took his hat and hurried out, after waiting a minute to put things straight in the laboratory. Mr. Rice, however, had arrived at Mrs. Major Acre's, and Mr. Castonel returned home.

On the following morning, Mrs. Leicester and Mr. Ailsa stood around the rector's dying bed. He lay partially insensible: had so lain ever since daylight. "Do you not think Dr. Wilson late?" whispered Mrs. Leicester. "It is half-past seven."

"I expected him before this," replied Mr. Ailsa. "But, dear Mrs. Leicester, he can do no good."

"I know it," she answered, through her tears.

At that moment there rang out the deep tones of the passing-bell, denoting that an immortal soul had been called away. One of the chamber windows was open, to admit air, and the sound came booming in from the opposite church. It aroused the rector.

"Have my people mistaken the moment of my departure?" he murmured. "Or is it that one of my fellow brethren is called with me?"

Mrs. Leicester leaned over him, and gently spoke, her ear having noted the strokes more accurately than that of the dying man. "It must be, I fear, for Mrs. Acre. It is for a woman."

"I fancy not for Mrs. Acre," observed Mr. Ailsa. "Mr. Rice left her, last night, out of danger."

It was striking out now, fast and loud. Mrs. Leicester noticed her husband's anxious eye. "Who goes with me?" he panted—"who goes with me?" and, just then, little Tuck stole into the room, with a whitened face.

"Who is the bell tolling for?" asked Mrs. Leicester.

"For Mrs. Castonel. She died in the night."

With a sharp cry, the rector struggled up in bed. What fear, what horror was it that distorted his countenance, as he grasped Mr. Ailsa's arm and strove to speak? They never knew, for he fell back speechless.

"Oh, where can Dr. Wilson be?" sobbed Mrs. Leicester. "Why is he not here?"

"He will not be long," whispered Mr. Tuck. "He was met outside the village, and taken to Mrs. Chavasse. The shock has brought on an attack of paralysis. Poor Castonel, Rice says, is in a lamentable state."

"What did she die of?" marvelled Mr. Ailsa.

"What did the others die of?" retorted Mr. Tuck. "Convulsions of some sort. Nobody knows. I never heard of such an unlucky man."

He was interrupted by a movement from Mrs. Leicester. The minister's spirit had passed away.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAME VAUGHAN'S WONDER.

It was the brightest day possible, and the sun shone on Ebury churchyard gaily and hotly. The two funerals had been arranged for the same day: but not intentionally. The bell had tolled from an early hour in the morning, out of respect to its regretted minister. Mr. Leicester's interment was fixed for ten o'clock, Mrs. Castonel's for eleven; consequently, no sooner had the clock struck nine, than stragglers began to move towards the churchyard, and soon they increased to groups, and soon to a crowd. All Ebury went there, and more than Ebury. They talked to one another (as though seeking an excuse) of paying the last tribute of respect to their many-years rector, but there was a more powerful inducement in their hearts—

that of witnessing the funeral of Mr. Castonel's wife, and of staring at him.

All the well-dressed people, and all who possessed pews, entered the church, until it was crammed in every nook, scarcely leaving room for the coffins to pass up the aisle. The mob held possession of the churchyard, and there was not an inch of land, no, nor of a grave, on which people were not standing.

They saw it file out of the rectory and cross the road, a simple funeral, Mr. Hurst officiating. The coffin was borne by eight labourers, old parishioners, and the mourners followed with many friends, Squire Hardwick of the Hall and Mr. Ailsa walking next the relatives. And so the body was consigned to the ground, and the traces of the first funeral passed away.

But what was that, compared with the show which followed? With its mutes, its feathers, its black chariots, its hearse, its mourning coaches, its velvet trappings, its pall-bearers, its trailing-scarfs and hatbands, its white handkerchiefs! The mutes alone, with their solemn faces and staffs of office, struck dumb the fry of infantry who had congregated amongst their elders.

"Look at him! look at him!" whispered the mob as Mr. Castonel moved up the path by slow degrees after the body, beadle and sexton clearing the way with difficulty. "Don't he look white? The handkercher he's a covering his face with ain't whiter."

"Enough to make him. He——"

"Hush-sh-sh! See who's a following of him! It's Mr. Chavassee. Sobbing like a child, for all he be such a great stout gentleman!"

"But Mr. Chavassee were still in foreign parts, and knowed nothing o' the death!"

"They sent him word, I heerd. And he come over the sea in a carriage and six, to be in time for it, and got here at half-after nine this morning. How he's a crying!"

"And his eldest son walking with him, and Master Arthur and the other behind, all crying too. Poor things!"

"It seems but yesterday that Miss Chavassee come here in Lord Eastberry's carriage, like a queen. Who so proud as she, in her veils and her feathers?"

"Queens die as well as other folks. It's said Mrs. Chavassee won't be long after her. She have had a shocking seizure."

"Well, it's a fearsome thing for the poor young lady to have been cut off so sudden."

"It were as fearsome a thing for the other two. And worse. For Miss Chavassee might have took warning by them, and not have had him."

"I know what I know," interrupted Dame Vaughan, who made one of the spectators. "That I should like to clear up what it was as did cut 'em off."

Murmurs were arising amongst the crowd. "Ay, what was it? what took 'em?"

"What took that baby of Mary Shipley's, as was lying safe and well on my knee two minutes afore it went into the agony?" persisted Dame Vaughan. "I have not forgot that, if others has. The physic I give to it was supplied from Mr. Castonel's stock."

"I heerd," broke in a young girl, "as this Mrs. Castonel died of convulsions."

"So they all did, so they all did. The wretch! the mur——"

"Come, come, you women," interrupted a man, "this ain't law nor gospel. Keep civil tongues in your heads."

But the cue had been given, the popular feeling arose, and hisses, groans, and ill words were poured upon Mr. Castonel. He could not look whiter or more impenetrable than he had done before, but he doubtless wished the beadle put to the torture for not forcing a passage more quickly that he might get inside the church. As soon as that object was attained, the beadle rushed back amongst the crowd, and used his tongue and his stick vigorously; and what with that, and his formidable cocked-hat, he succeeded in enforcing silence.

So Frances, Mrs. Castonel, was laid in her grave, like unto the two fair flowers who had gone before her, and the procession returned, in its course, and disappeared. And the mob disappeared in its wake after winding up with three groans for Mr. Castonel.

(To be concluded.)

LINE UPON LINE.

HEAVEN is not reached by a single bound,
 But we build the ladder by which we rise
 From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
 And we mount to its summit round by round.

* * * * *

We rise by the things that are under our feet;
 By what we have mastered of good and gain;
 By the pride deposed and the passion slain,
 And the vanquished ills that we hourly meet.

THE ROMANCE OF SPAIN.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN THE LOTUS LAND," "LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA," ETC., ETC.



THE shades of night were falling and the city was at its best. As we stood in the square, and gazed upon the west front of the Cathedral, we certainly felt that we had not come to Burgos in vain. In spite of all disappointment and all discomfort, the splendid outline of Santa Maria was an experience to be seen and to be remembered. This alone, if nothing else, would afterwards make the visit to Burgos never to be regretted.

But the interest of Burgos is chiefly ecclesiological. It lies in its churches, far more than in domestic architecture of the town. Street after street has been spoilt. Houses have been taken down; romance has vanished. A fine groined passage leads from the south doorway of the Cathedral to the Bishop's Palace, but the palace itself has been very much

modernised. Other beauties are falling almost to decay.

Opposite the fortifications round the ruins of the old castle—from which you have so splendid a view of the whole length of the Cathedral in all its charm and beauty and refinement of outline—stands an ancient church; the church of St. Esteban. The west doorway was fine and had some good sculpture about it, but the doors were locked, and apparently are always kept locked. It seemed disused, almost desecrated. Daily service is certainly not held there, whatever may happen on a Sunday. The doors themselves looked in the last stage of existence.

Yet the interior is beautiful, in spite of its mutilation. We entered by some small but lovely cloisters built about the year 1300. These are in a very bad state, but their charm still exists. They

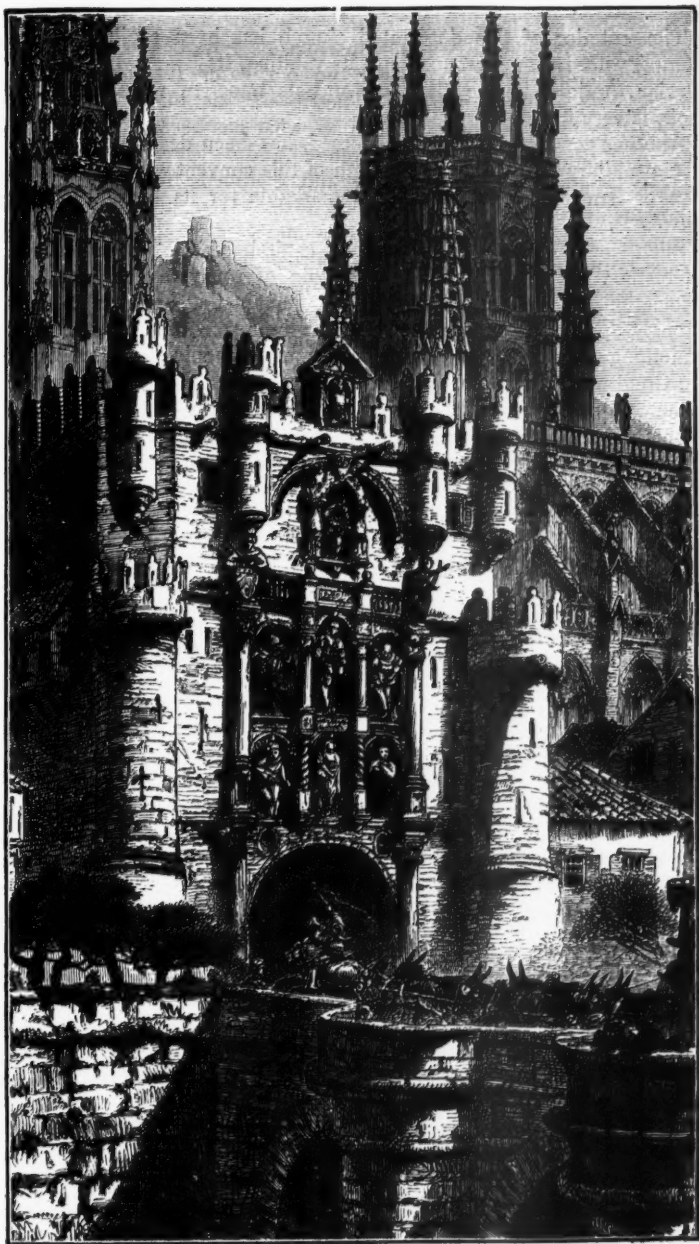
are neglected ; open to all the mischievous boys of the town ; have a sad, abandoned air, as though no one cared for their lingering beauty. The window tracery is destroyed, and many of them are blocked up ; nevertheless one can see what has been. The groining was excellent ; the whole cloister refined and delicate.

The church itself was simple and dignified, but spoilt by the abominable tone given by the yellow wash. Here, also, was excellent groining. The columns of the nave arcades were circular ; and in some respects the planning of the Cathedral had been imitated. The light came only from windows high up in the clerestory. A small western gallery was charming, but of somewhat later period—about the year 1450. Two ambons projected like pulpits at each end of the balustrade with excellent effect. The choir were placed here, as is so often the case in Spanish churches. The organ was on the north side in a bay, and below it was the pulpit : and organ, loft, and pulpit were of Plateresque Renaissance work : a style introduced by Bereguet and so-called from its plate-like delicacy of detail in relief, minute and distinct.

This church of St. Esteban, like many other buildings in Burgos, will pass into inevitable decay for want of attention. Some have become altogether desecrated, like the convent of San Pablo, now used as a cavalry-store.

It was founded by San Pablo, a Jew converted to Christianity, and his monument still remains there. He endeavoured to convert his wife also, but failed. Therefore he discarded her, though she was the lawful mother of his four sons and one only daughter. One feels inclined to sympathise with the brave wife, who would sooner suffer desertion than change her faith. Yet she does not seem to have borne him enmity, but the opposite, and to have rejoiced in his success.

To contribute to this, and to enable him to enter the priesthood, he legally dissolved his marriage. In due time—whilst at Valladolid—he was made Bishop of Burgos. The whole town went out to meet him, and he made a triumphant entry into the city. His mother, Doña Maria, and his wife, Joana, waited in the Episcopal Palace, to greet him, congratulate him and wish him every good. A strange meeting, this, between the wife who was no wife and the celibate Bishop who, in the sight of heaven was not unwedded. There must have been strangely-mixed feelings on both sides : and one can fancy that whilst Doña Maria, the mother, was proud of her son's success, her sympathies no less went out to the daughter-in-law, whose wifely claims had been so easily set aside. Both were still of the same faith—Jewesses, and no doubt clung to each other. Five years after his triumphal entry into Burgos, he became a widower in fact and deed : the devoted Joana died ; and who shall declare that sorrow and disappointment had not something to do with her departure. The Bishop survived his wife fifteen years, dying at the ripe age of eighty-five.



GATEWAY OF SANTA MARIA, BURGOS.

The exterior of this desecrated church has been spoilt, but the interior, with its fine proportions, its vaulting, its lancet windows, its circular windows in the clerestory and its traceried windows in the choir, is very fine.

Another convent, that of La Merced, has been desecrated, and is now a military hospital. The church of this convent was built on the plan of San Pablo, but is chiefly remarkable for its beautiful flying buttresses.

Such remains make this ancient capital of Castile and Leon interesting. It is surrounded by a halo of romance and historical association, of which so few traces now remain that one has to draw strongly upon one's imagination for the influence of the past. Yet something still exists beyond mere tradition. Here lived St. Ferdinand the Good and Alonzo the Wise, and it is impossible to mention the name of Burgos without conjuring up visions of the mighty Cid, with all his dramatic power and activity. But it existed before his time, for it was founded in 884 by Diego de Porcello, a small town that paid tribute to the Kings of Leon; and later on asserted its independence under Gonzalez the first Count of Castile. Then followed many years of prosperity, until Toledo arose and became the Castilian capital; so mighty and flourishing that the glory of Burgos departed after three centuries of struggling for the mastery, of jealousy of its more fortunate rival, of internal dissensions.

One can hardly wonder at this. It is a hard matter to be supplanted. Tibni dies and Omni reigns, and that is all as it should be; but if they reigned together, one would presently have to give way. So Burgos had to yield to Toledo, when the faithless kings of Castile removed their court to the newer and more successful city: a supremacy it has never forfeited, though it has lost all its prosperity.

Of the comparatively recent past of Burgos, that is to say, the 16th century, the Gateway of Santa Maria, which is attached to the old city walls, is the most prominent record. It also gives you a somewhat false impression of the town, for it is almost the first object to attract attention on leaving the railway station, and stands out so strikingly, with the cathedral spires and pinnacles rising behind it, that anticipation of a crowd of better things to come is raised to the highest point: only to lead to disillusion.

The Gateway is undoubtedly a worthy entrance to the cathedral square beyond, and to the far more beautiful cathedral itself. And within the Gateway in an upper chamber, is an interesting collection of remains—tombs, monuments, and a multitude of objects, drawings and designs—which carry you back to the Roman, Mediæval and Renaissance times, more vividly than almost any thing within the town itself. Here we saw engravings of the lovely cloisters of the Convent of Las Huelgas, where in ancient days the Abbess and Princess-Palatine would pace to and fro, pondering it may be over the fate of some unhappy mortal, perhaps innocent of transgression, and deter

mining whether it should be life or death with them. Wonderfully beautiful and full of charm they looked, and more than ever we regretted the untoward fortune, the bars and bolts, that kept us outside the magic gates.

We passed through that massive gateway of Santa Maria for the last time on our way to the cathedral, after visiting Las Huelgas. The vision of the graceful nuns at their devotions, flitting like silent shadows to and fro in the nave set apart for them, so strongly guarded by the great iron screen, still haunted us. Not more silent—though far less graceful and interesting—were the stone images that adorned the front of the gateway and looked down upon us with sightless eyes. In the gloaming, as we have recorded, the cathedral with all its refined points and pinnacles, looked almost unearthly against the evening sky, with all its soft and vanishing colours. Of the interior and its effect upon us we have spoken. Were we to visit it again, our impression would be the same; the same our verdict of disappointment and disillusion.

We decided to leave Burgos that night. The train started about ten o'clock—an uncomfortable time, but it was the only available train in the twenty-four hours. We should travel all night, but a night in the train would be far pleasanter than another night in this ungenial hotel. The landlord did not improve, but on the contrary grew more churlish as our departure drew near. We wondered whether he suffered from severe dyspepsia, or a shrewish wife, or a falling ledger, either of which misfortunes has been known before now to turn all the latent humanity in a man's nature to gall and bitterness. "Inexplicably bad qualities are almost always symptoms of severe hidden illness," once said a quaint old German doctor to us, himself full of benevolence, impulse and indiscretion: but our landlord looked the picture of health, and was fast reaching the circumference of waist at which proportion ceases and discomfort begins. It was simply his nature to be disagreeable. There are such people in the world, and they are not confined to Spain.

We sauntered through the streets of the town for a final impression, a last good-bye: were just in time to see the old watchmen turn out with their heavy coats and lanterns: huge apparitions: Gog and Magog going forth to battle. Our guide of last night recognised us, and so evidently wished we had again lost our way that we were fain to reward him for work not done.

He was interested in hearing that we were about to leave; that, so to say, we were being driven from the place for want of decent accommodation: a host who knew not the meaning of his name or the nature of his office. The old watchman shook his lantern angrily and a thousand fantastic shadows—living, we were persuaded—protested against this hospitality withheld. He sighed, and what a gigantic sigh it was. The very bells of the cathedral seemed affected by it, for at that moment they struck out the hour in melancholy tones: a

requiem to the departed host. For the watchman was telling us how he remembered the ancient inn opposite the great church of Santa Maria. How comfortable and happy everyone had been there. What a right royal host the old landlord was. How many a time as the cathedral clock chimed midnight, he had in wintry weather, when snow lay upon the ground, and icicles hung from the beards of the stone images upon the old gateway, with his own hand administered to the watchman a glass of something hot and comforting, and then had gone in and bolted and barred for the night. Whilst the watchman had gone on his way crying with stentorian lungs: "Past twelve o'clock, and a wintry night. Oh ye who are warm in your beds, pity him who keeps watch and ward over you through the dark hours. *Il Sereno!*"

It blew keenly enough to-night in this ancient city 3000 feet above the level of the sea, but the snow season had not yet arrived. It was not a white world, suggestive of Christmas, of Peace on earth towards men of Good-will; of torchlight processions and midnight skating parties; experiences so delightful in northern latitudes, but unknown in the softer south. The plains of Castile are wide, bare and unprotected; the wind sweeps over them with a harsh, penetrating force, with a moaning, melancholy sound, as though it mourned for the departed glories of Castile: for the days when the Cid went forth conquering and to conquer; when Fernando the Good sat upon the throne of his fathers; when Belchides built the old castle ere yet 900 years had rolled over the Christian world; that castle where Edward of England espoused Eleanor of Castile with an array of pomp and pageantry rare even in that imaginative land. Days of mighty works and deeds; when glorious structures, such as the world sees no more, rose stone by stone, vast in size, perfect in form. And as we walked, there presently appeared against the background of blue sky, clear-cut, refined, dream-like, the outlines of Santa Maria la Mayor: more beautiful then than now, when its exquisite roof had not been unworthily supplanted, and restoration had not interfered with the first designs.

To-night the wind blew keenly across the plains, and rushed down the streets. But the clear, starlit skies shone down upon a dark world, not a white one. The old watchman seemed impervious and substantial as one of the old city walls. His voice rolled out the hour in a diapason that appeared to come from the depths of the earth; his seven-leagued boots echoed through the silent streets.

He evidently had a mind for our company, for as we wandered on, he deserted his beat and wandered also. We were glad of the picturesque figure in our last walk. He would be for ever mixed up with our final impressions of this otherwise inhospitable city. A man of humble rank, yet far removed from the commonplace.

We halted in front of the Town Hall, and he threw his lantern's reflection upon it. The lights and shadows playing in the old archway



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might have been the shades of the old Cid and his faithful wife Ximena, whose bones rest within, dancing the Dance of Death.

Again as we looked, the melancholy cathedral bells chimed a quarter. We shall never think of Burgos without hearing those bells in imagination. Once more and for the last time, we gazed upon the wonderful outlines beneath which those unmusical bells reposed. The lights and shadows of the watchman's lantern could not reach these. They were too far away, too near the skies. The west front uprose majestically; the porches in deep shadow looked weird and mysterious: portals leading into a sacred, silent world.

We had to turn from it all; to say farewell to the old watchman; to bid him remember the lost wanderers whom he had safely piloted into harbour: a cold and cheerless harbour, but gladly hailed, since any port is welcome in a storm. He passed slowly from our sight for ever.

We turned towards our inn. The rattling funereal omnibus stood at the door, waiting our pleasure. A pleasure indeed to pass out for the last time from this cheerless mansion. The sentry guarding the opposite barracks presented arms as we entered the gloomy depths of the ancient sarcophagus. It was as well, perhaps, that his commanding officer was not looking out from an upper window, as he had been a few hours ago. His little joke might have cost him somewhat dearly.

Or perhaps he meant it in sober earnest. He may have taken H. C. for a great general: or a powerful commander-in-chief from beyond the seas. For he is a strange mixture, is H. C., and now looks like a lovelorn poet writing sonnets to his lady's eyebrows; and now like another Napoleon going forth to conquer worlds. We can only explain the apparent contradiction by the fact that there is a duality in every man's character. To-night he wore the Napoleon type. That sentry was probably a reader of character—even in the darkness: and so presented arms: perhaps in spite of himself. There are influences so strong that we cannot contend against them. Often they are unconscious influences. The sentry recognised greatness when he saw it. This argued that perhaps he himself would one day be great, if it be true that we can only appreciate Shakespeare by the Shakespeare that is within us.

So we passed away from the precincts of those inhospitable quarters.

“Blow, blow, thou wintry wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.”

Again Shakespeare was right. We slightly shivered as we entered the gloomy depths of the omnibus. So did H. C., though it was

quite beneath his Napoleon endurance to do so. But the east wind was very keen indeed. It blew right across the river, and seemed to sweep over the tops of the houses, and rushed through the streets with a moaning, searching sound. It would have no pity upon this inhospitable city. In kindly St. Sebastian, we had midsummer heat and laughing sunshine; here we froze. The elements were consistent and knew what they were about.

We were not alone in the omnibus. Just as we were starting two or three darkly-clad figures came quickly out of the hotel. They were evidently commercial travellers, and explained the mystery of the Alpine stacks of luggage that placed the roof and our lives in jeopardy. These men rushed into the road like a whirlwind. After them rushed the irate landlord. Whether they had refused to pay his bill, abused his commissariat department, offered to salute his wife or to run away with his daughter—supposing him to possess these unmerited blessings—we never discovered. Whatever the offence, it was mortal; and in mortal combat we thought they would engage in the middle of the road, that dark night in the streets of Burgos.

The glimmering lights of the hotel threw their pale gleams upon the raging faces of the four men. The landlord was without his hat; his hair was wild. Their voices rose above the shrieking of the wintry wind; the sound was far more terrible; caused us a keener shivering. The sentry, wise man, made ready to fire, in case they should attack him in their madness. A wise general is never taken unawares. The Napoleon type in H. C. rather retired into the background. It may have been fancy, but we thought we heard the sound of teeth chattering; and after all, the wind was distinctly keen and severe.

Then suddenly the tempest of sound, the raging torrent of words and gestures and loud voices ceased.

We looked, expecting to see four men dead upon the ground. Instead of which, they had suddenly made it up and were embracing all round. There was a gleam of gold in the landlord's hand; on his face an expression of fiendish triumph. He had conquered: supreme will against brute force. Numbers count for little; generalship wins the day. An ounce of tact is worth a hundredweight of force.

The sentry was quietly withdrawing his cartridge, with a smile of derision that would have made his fortune upon the stage. He thoroughly appreciated the situation, and probably stored up a lesson for future use.

The three belligerents stumbled into the omnibus; its darkness swallowed them up. We retreated to the furthest corners and barricaded ourselves with our traps. H. C. spread his rug and held it ready to throw over the head of the first one who might show signs of besieging him—as the toreadors serve the enraged animals in their bull-fights. At last, after long detention, we rattled off. We almost feared we should lose the train. The driver evidently thought so too, for he went like the wind.

He had not gone two hundred yards before the reconciled men suddenly repented, wanted to return and have it out all over again. They bombarded the roof and rattled the door, and shouted to the driver to stop. He was too wise. He only whipped up his horses and went on faster than ever. Having caged his lions he kept them.

We rattled down the promenade with its new houses, brilliant electric lights, and modern cafés that looked so warm and comfortable in comparison with our present quarters. Then came the fine old gateway of Santa Maria, whose stone images seemed to bid us a farewell as cold and unsympathetic as we had found our sojourn. Once more and for the last time we heard the cathedral bells ring out the quarter, and felt their want of harmony not altogether out of place. We thundered over the bridge, beneath which ran the silent river, and looking upwards saw, dim and very shadowy, the wonderful outlines of the cathedral rising into the dark dome of night.

It was our final impression, and the best we could take away with us. In a few moments there came a comparative stillness—we had reached the station. The three men tumbled out as they had tumbled in. They began their argument all over again, one with another; not quarrelling, but proving their case. The offending landlord was happily absent, or this time his life would probably have been taken. *Reculer pour mieux sauter* is a true proverb: their rage was stronger for its temporary lull. It is just the same with squalls at sea; with hurricanes on dry land. And a human life more or less, in Spain, does not count. It is not half so precious as gratified revenge. We left them to it, and never knew whether they allowed their grievance to get the better of their train.

It was a dark night. The station was feebly lighted. Passengers were few—in spite of there being only this one train in the twenty-four hours. The signal was down and in a few moments we saw lights approaching out of the darkness.

We hoped for an empty compartment, but hoped in vain. When the train came up most carriages presented the usual night appearance: here a party of noisy smokers blowing clouds and playing cards; there a few sleepy travellers who had made themselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted. If we opened the door upon these, a wild and matted head looked up and frowned upon us as if we had been fiends incarnate. We had neither heart nor wish to disturb them.

"Eureka!" cried H. C. who was taking a rapid survey of windows. "Here is a compartment with only a monk inside: a picturesque monk. The very thing. We could desire nothing better."

But we hesitated.

"Is there not some slight risk?" we asked anxiously. "Is it not a part of their religion never to change their things until they drop to pieces?"

"Oh, this is a gentleman," returned H. C., "or he would not be travelling in a first-class carriage. There can be no danger."



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Still we were not convinced. "Would not the gentleman be merged in the monk?" we asked, feeling it must be so.

But H. C. had not stopped for further parley. Opening the door and springing into the carriage, he began settling our traps. The decision taken out of our hands, we followed humbly, giving the monk all possible latitude in passing. The shield was over the lamp and we saw things indistinctly; but he was certainly a picturesque object, as H. C. had remarked.

When we first looked in he was lying down; even monks will unbend in travelling and make themselves at home; but on opening the door he got up, adjusted his cowl, and moved his seat. He was habited in a brown cloak, the order of our favourite Carthusians.

Favourite for many associations' sake. Visits paid to that far-off monastery in the Dauphiné. Nights spent under its cold, cheerless, but hospitable roof. Conversations with many a father and brother. Assistance at midnight masses, fortified thereto by generous doles of their matchless liqueur.

Associations nearer home also. The old Carthusians of Smithfield; their bygone history; the few exquisite traces that remain of the past which we are never tired of haunting. The old Charterhouse precincts, with its present-day brethren, some of whom look as though they might have been handed down through the centuries.

Lastly the school which carries on the name to posterity, and flourishes on the heights of Godalming.

So for us the very word Carthusian is surrounded with romance; not that we would join its confraternity or wish others to do so. Let us think of the good of those old days, and be satisfied that the evil is over. Let us stick to our Reformation, and rejoice in our freedom. There is none outside it.

So it happened that we felt a glow of sympathy and friendliness for our Carthusian fellow-traveller. We uncovered the lamp. Had we observed his order at the first moment, we should not have hesitated to enter, risk or no risk. We should have been glad of his company, even though he might have been too sleepy or too absorbed for conversation. His very image brought back a thousand recollections; some full of happiness, others clothed in sorrow and sadness, all tinged with the bitter-sweet that ever enshrouds the past: but none we would be without.

As the train moved on, our traveller's cowl fell back, revealing a black head of hair, closely cropt. The head was well-shaped, the face unmistakably that of a gentleman. An extremely handsome face, with large, dark, soft eyes that seemed clouded with sadness. The face was pale, and a well-trimmed short dark beard and moustache almost concealed the mouth and chin. But when he opened his mouth he disclosed a set of white and perfect teeth, and when he spoke his voice was soft and musical. He might have been thirty-five years old.

What had induced him to forsake the world and bury himself in a monkish recess? It seemed a thousand pities. Had his heart broken before taking the vows? Had some fair woman's heart broken also? For such a man many a woman's heart would break. What was the mystery and romance? It was evident that his life had had to do with both. Everything about him was refined. Even his cloak and cowl seemed made of finer stuff than that generally accorded to monks. Was this due to nothing but his higher instincts, or had he still some lingering remains of a bygone vanity? Had he still some little love left for self, and beauty, and refinement, and the eternal fitness of things? Did the world possess still a little of his heart? a fractional desire to stand well in the eyes of his fellow-men, as in days for ever past? The thought was painful; as to some extent pain was mixed with the whole impression he produced.

We spoke to him. He was a Spaniard, but his French was perfect; we could meet on mutual ground. Perhaps there was something in our voice which betrayed sympathy and interest; it may be that its tones awoke some familiar strain of the past: the lingering echo of a brother, or a close friend. Certain it is that he immediately responded. His eyes lost their sadness and brightened up almost with fire and fervour. His attitude gained energy. He leaned forward and looked into our faces as though he would learn whether curiosity or something truer had intruded upon his meditations. Apparently he was satisfied. Instead of a brief reply, an adjusting of the cowl and a return to self-absorption, he grew animated, and entered freely into conversation. Perhaps he felt there was that mysterious, indefinable link between us—sympathy: the one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin.

Our interesting monk entered into animated conversation. The train rolled on and the moments seemed to fly with it. Gradually he spoke of himself: alluded to his past. For an instant there was a tremor in his voice; again that cloud of sadness in his soft and beautiful eyes. We were keenly interested and showed it. We hinted as delicately as we could that the little we had heard made us desire more. Finally, he opened his heart and gave us his confidences: a complete outline of his strange eventful life.

The train stopped at Medina. Here, as fortune would have it, we both changed; both had to wait nearly two hours for incoming trains.

In the darkness we paced the long platform to and fro, whilst the great outline of his past expanded and we listened with unwavering interest. Some day we may record the history; here we have neither time nor space. It was crowded with human interest; a marvellous experience full of lesson. The two hours passed, and it had seemed so many moments. We had lost count of time; and, so graphic his descriptions, had entered a new existence.

And now he had done with that existence. Ere the prime of life had matured he had turned his back upon all that to most men

makes life worth living. The love of woman, domestic happiness, social pleasures, these were never to be his. Solitude, penance, the monk's cell, and the monk's fare, this to a great extent would henceforth be his portion. It was full of sadness ; a mistaken zeal ; not zeal at all, we thought, but a morbidness that would die out with time, leaving him high and dry on a wrecked strand. Then his eyes would open to his mistake, and disappointment would eat into his soul.

Every word he uttered proved that, unconsciously, he still hungered, not for the fleshpots of Egypt, but for the stirring and wholesome life of what is a wholesome world to all who will make it so.

We made some such remark ; a half suggestion ; putting it more in the form of a problem than a prophecy ; lest we should awaken him to a consciousness of an evil for which we had no remedy. But there was a remedy. "It is not too late to return to the world," he said. "I have taken vows for five years and may then, if I please, lay aside cowl and cloak, and once more buckle on sword and helmet : cease to be Brother Antonio, and once more assume the pomp and splendour of *Il Conte* ——. I can do so ; it is possible that I may do so ; but I have a conviction that I shall not change. And I think that if by that time I still feel that a monk's life is the life for me, it will prove that I have not made a mistake, and shall not be unhappy in the retirement of the cloister."

Yet he sighed deeply as he spoke. We felt that his argument was based on philosophy, not conviction. He was persuading himself against his better judgment.

Our train came up first, and he saw us comfortably settled in our compartment.

"Good-bye," he said, with a sweet, sad smile ; clasping hands with a warmth that was very unmonkish. "But it is not farewell. Something tells me we shall meet again. I have not known you for hours, but for years. I shall picture you, taking your part in the world, filling in all the details of life ; gradually rounding to that far-off event which happens to us all. You will think of me as growing more and more into the ascetic monk ; the years bringing no change ; youth and comeliness disappearing under the influence of fastings and vigils ; a denial of the appetite which does not exist ; a penance for sins never committed."

Again he sighed and again we felt that he knew he was cherishing a false persuasion.

Taking a small note-book from the inner pocket of his monk's cloak, he hastily wrote down two names and addresses upon it, and gave it to us.

"Such I was in this gay world," he said ; "such I am now in religious retirement. That is my present cloister. You will never pass near me, whether in the world or out of the world, without finding me out."

And then we parted. He remained on the platform, gazing after the train that was taking us wider afield : a solitary silent, picturesque figure, whose grace and comeliness the monk's dress could not conceal. We saw him draw his cowl over his head, as though he would shut out with it the world and its memories. That could not be. His outlines soon faded in the dark night, and our last glimpse of him showed his hand pointing upwards : whether registering a fresh vow, or wishing to intimate to us as a final impression that all his thoughts must henceforth be directed heavenwards, we could not tell. Two minutes afterwards the train passed us that was to carry him into monkish retirement.

We went on in the dark night, but the darkness concealed little that was interesting. Mile after mile was a slow progress through the barren plains of Castile : especially bare bleak and desolate in this autumn weather, with an east wind blowing. Yet the wind was less searching and unkindly than we had found it at Burgos.

The hours passed, and when a faint glimmer of dawn was breaking, we reached Segovia.

It was about five o'clock, and still too dark to discern much beyond immediate outlines. A small omnibus waited at the station, capable of holding six people. Exactly six passengers appeared to fill it, but none of them were of those who had thirsted for the life of the Burgos landlord. These were quiet and peaceful men. One it is true carried a gun and a sword, but otherwise he looked very unwarlike.

No signs of the town were visible, and it was evident that we had a drive before us. Every instant the light increased ; lovely colours began to show themselves in the east. From the moment we approached the town we felt that we were entering upon a rare experience. As yet we had seen nothing like it. Presently we came to straggling, crumbling walls ; to detached houses ; then to a view of the town itself. To massive town walls, such as we had never before met with, full of age and picturesque romance. Over all there was a splendid tone ; an eastern tone ; a warm tinge of yellow that seems reserved for the lands of strong sunshine, as though the sun had thrown golden colour permanently upon all.

From the first moment we loved the place and felt at home in it, and knew that we should leave it again with infinite regret. We could not have arrived at a happier hour.

At a sort of half-way house, long before entering the town, the omnibus stopped. It was a large stone building, closed and shuttered. We wondered whether this was the inn, and if so, whether like the hotel at St. Sebastian, visitors were unexpected. But only our warlike friend got out with his gun and sword, clanking down the omnibus steps and across the road with a truly martial sound which made one realise all the horrors of war and all the blessings of peace. Still the house remained in impenetrable silence and darkness. As he reached the door it mysteriously opened without summons, he passed

out of sight, and the door closed again. The door-keeper on this occasion was either in police or military uniform, so that evidently our mysterious house was an official residence.

The omnibus went on, and describing a half-circle round the walls, we suddenly came in full view of the wonderful Roman Aqueduct, stretching across the country, sharply outlined against the clear morning sky. As we have just said we could not possibly have arrived at a more fitting moment: with all the lovely mysterious light of early morning glorifying heaven and earth.

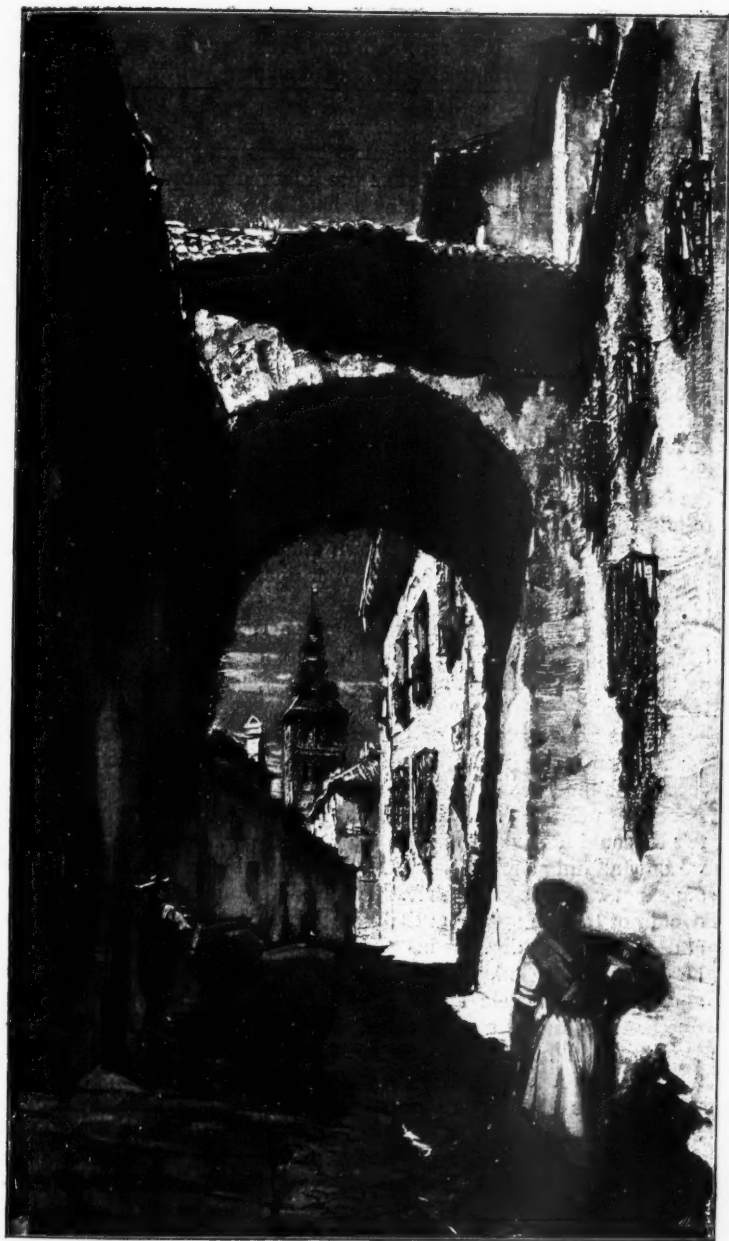
There was the Aqueduct built so many centuries ago by the Romans, who, we know, occupied Spain 200 years before and 400 years after the Christian Era. It is generally attributed to Trajan, and very probably was built by him. The Aqueduct has been in use ever since, and is the most perfect now in existence. It would be difficult to say how romantic and imposing it looked in that pale early light, a far-off chain of low, undulating hills circling beyond it.

Immediately we went back to charmed days and hours when we had first made acquaintance with Rome, and down the Appian Way, beyond the tombs and monuments had first seen stretching across the Campagna towards the Alban Hills the wonderful remains of that other Trajan Aqueduct. But those are fragments only; here at Segovia, we still found the aqueduct in all its glory: as useful, as substantial, as time-defying as the day it was completed.

Of course it has not escaped the fortunes of war. It has gone through vicissitudes; hard blows, unkind treatment; but it has survived. Its construction was in the manner best known to, most used by, the Romans. Nothing could be more simple and enduring. It is all constructed of granite, one enormous stone laid upon another without cement or mortar. The country people call it *El puente del Diablo*; but at home and abroad the sable name is sure to be introduced by some romantic legend into everything that is stupendous in the way of scenery or construction.

The particular legend in this instance, declares that the devil was enamoured of a fair and faultless maiden of Segovia. He offered to do anything in the world for her if she would only accept him. The maiden's hardest daily task was to carry pails of water up and down hill. Weary of this, she agreed to be his if he would build an aqueduct in one night. No sooner said than done. The next morning the wonderful "Devil's Bridge" was seen stretching across the country, whilst pure and sparkling water flowed freely to the upper town.

The maiden was in despair; she need no longer carry pails of water, but her vow must be kept. Was there no loophole of escape? Could not a fair Segovian maiden prove a match for the devil? Why, yes. At the last moment it was found that the aqueduct was not complete; the devil had forgotten to place the last stone. So the Church held the maiden free from her promise, and she triumphantly married a fair and flourishing youth of Segovia, who had long been



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her heart's delight. It is recorded they lived happily ever after, and brought up a large family of sons and daughters, which perhaps was more than she quite deserved—only that we all get more than our deserts.

So much for legend and romance. Reality and plain facts bring us to the Romans: and it is quite possible that many a fair maid of Segovia gave her hand to many a handsome and stalwart Roman builder, but about this history is silent.

We only know that the aqueduct is there. It stretches in front of one of the entrances to Segovia like a huge triumphal arch: arch upon arch, arch beyond arch. Nothing can be more striking; no other town has so fine a monument of antiquity. The aqueduct was much wanted. Segovia stands high upon a bold rocky knoll some 3000 feet above the level of the sea. It commands magnificently the surrounding country; the far-reaching plains, the barren hills beyond. Small rivers encircle it, some of them full of delicious trout; all charming and romantic to look at. But the waters are not good for use; whilst ten miles away, in the Sierra Fonfria, also a barren chain of hills, there ran a lovely supply of pure fresh liquid—the Rio Frio. It was to bring this water to the town that the dauntless Romans built the aqueduct, conferring a lasting favour upon Segovia, for it has been in use ever since.

In 1071 it was injured by the Moors of Toledo, when they sacked Segovia, and in their jealousy would gladly have brought it utterly to an end. But the old town, like the Phoenix, rose with fresh life from its ashes.

Yet the ruined portion of the aqueduct was not restored for 400 years, when at the instigation of Isabella the Good, a monk of the recently founded convent of El Parral took it in hand. This Juan Escovedo was a man of sense and parts, of good taste withal. He felt he could not improve upon the Romans—and let well alone. If we only all did as much! He had his model before him, and soon the aqueduct was once more perfect; a thing of beauty, a joy for ever; you could not tell the new from the old. Then Juan, adjusting his girdle and sandals and drawing his cowl, set out for distant Seville; and he thought the journey a much harder task than repairing the aqueduct. At Seville he found the Queen, who received him with due honours and as payment for his labour gave him all the scaffolding that had been used in repairing the aqueduct. Whether that amounted to a heavy fee, and whether Juan was satisfied, history on this matter is silent. Probably love for his work had already proved his reward.

Our glimpse of the Aqueduct that early morning was sufficient to show us what a mighty work it was: how favoured Segovia in possessing it. But the omnibus rattled on, and we found ourselves slowly ascending.

Within the walls of the town our vision was confined, but we asked

for nothing better. Every step of the way revealed the fact that Segovia was a town of towns; a rich storehouse of treasures. The ancient element abounded. The tone upon everything was exquisite; the outlines everywhere were marvellous. Apparently it was not a medley of ancient and modern, a compromise of old and new: but a true city of antiquity. The omnibus suddenly came to a standstill, and we found ourselves in the great square. Here we were bidden to alight. It was a gaol delivery, for every one did so. Then we found that our fellow-passengers went their several ways; none of them were for the hotel.



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We looked up as we got out but saw no signs of any inn. The square was ancient and picturesque. Arcades ran round it, and one side of the square was in ruins; the arches of the arcades stood out solitary and crumbling. This only added to the picturesque effect. It was like a Roman ruin.

Then we found that the inn was at the opposite side of the square. In the early morning light we streamed across it, a small procession. The stars had gone in, the pale sky looked coldly down upon us. Half a dozen hotel "appendages" accompanied us: the smallest object to carry was an excuse for swelling the number of "retainers." With the least encouragement they would have carried ourselves. No

one else was abroad ; it was a small, still, sleeping world ; so that our procession was all the more solemn and conspicuous. Why the omnibus could not have deposited us at the door of the inn we never knew ; the same thing happened on leaving.

But the short walk was delightful. The air was fresh, keen and bracing. Everything looked ancient and time-honoured, full of lights and shadows—the grey lights and shadows of early morning.

And there, to our right, most splendid object of all, rose the cathedral in outlines that were absolutely magical. This indeed was a very different matter from the Aqueduct. That was absolute simplicity of design ; here we were confronted by the beauties of architecture, richness of decoration, by an infinite variety of details. Peaks and pinnacles rose heavenward : a magnificent dome was sharply cut against the early sky. There was something gorgeous and quite eastern in the general effect of the cathedral as we gazed upon it this morning. It rose in great beauty and grace, in all the charm of the florid Gothic. In tone it was warm and eminently pleasing. We were in full view of the rich East end, which was full of charming detail and decoration, and “graceful diminishings.” Above the houses and arcades rose the square tower with its Cupola—again with almost eastern effect.

Our enthusiasm rose to the highest point. After the disappointments of San Sebastian and Burgos we felt that here was a rich reward. Yet the world does not rave about Segovia. One hears of Burgos and Toledo from every point of the compass ; a thousand voices are lifted up in honour of these towns, a thousand tongues proclaim their wonders ; but little is said about Segovia. Not one person in a hundred who visits Spain goes to Segovia. It is a mystery ; it is incomprehensible. If we were asked which town in Spain we would place above all others in beauty, in interest, in charm, we should unhesitatingly say Segovia. It may be doubted whether, in its way, it does not stand before any town in the world.

This we in a sense realised even in that first early morning impression. But arrived at the inn we felt that here at any rate we should not be housed in the lap of luxury. It was even more primitive than Burgos, though it proved far pleasanter.

Here, too, we had to ascend—the hotel quarters were on the second floor. The staircase was poor and shabby ; the unenterprising people of the inn were still sleeping. The boys who brought up our luggage hardly seemed to belong to it. However, we were given rooms, and on throwing open our window, were charmed with the view.


Before us was the square we had just traversed. We looked upon quaint old roofs which might have been untouched for centuries : slanting red roofs, in which dormer windows were set like wonderful eyes. Far below us were the quaint arcades, the ruins standing out with a charming effect that might have been designed ; only that the

good folk of Segovia do not premeditate their artistic effect. Nature and the art of a bygone age have done everything for them : that and the comparative poverty of the present, which has prevented them from destroying their beautiful ancient landmarks and building up modern hideousness.

To our left rose the cathedral, more lovely than ever in its warm rich colour ; its singular and matchless diversity of outline : tower and dome, and peak and pinnacle and flying buttress : a rich assemblage of architectural beauties all sharply pencilled against the clear sky.

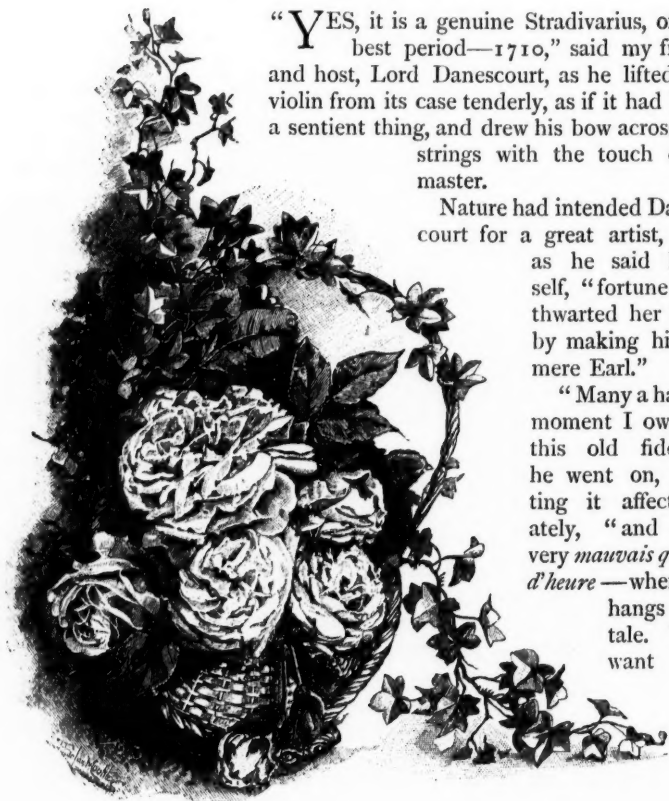
Then upshot the sun behind us ; and immediately everything was gilded, everything was glowing. In the sky the colours were magnificent ; fleecy clouds sailed across the blue, touched with gold and crimson. The town was beginning to awaken. Almost we expected to see a procession of heralds proclaim the new day with silver trumpets. Instead of which the bells of the church clashed out upon the air, telling the world it was time to be up and rising. Even these, if we could not say very much in their favour, were infinitely before the bells of Burgos. And well it was so, for they were very near to us. Doors opened, people came forth, the business of the day was being taken in hand. As yet it was of a very domestic nature ; dust-carts, and dishevelled maidens, and early greetings in the market-place ; a general taking down of shutters : details that are *not* romantic, though necessary ; but everything in its place and all in good time. The bells clashed on, and at last died away in faint whispers and vibrations.

And hovering round the towers and domes of the cathedral ; and above the quaint roofs of the houses ; and over the head of the wonderful viaduct bringing its sparkling water to the town ; and across the far reaching valleys ; and over the tops of the barren hills : a thousand heralds seemed to proclaim through earth and heaven—not the break of day, not a summons to work, but the words, infinitely multiplied : “Romance, Romance ! Behold here the romance, the true ROMANCE OF SPAIN !”



A VIOLINIST'S ADVENTURE.

BY M. E. STANLEY PENN.



"YES, it is a genuine Stradivarius, of the best period—1710," said my friend and host, Lord Danescourt, as he lifted the violin from its case tenderly, as if it had been a sentient thing, and drew his bow across the strings with the touch of a master.

Nature had intended Danescourt for a great artist, but, as he said himself, "fortune had thwarted her plan by making him a mere Earl."

"Many a happy moment I owe to this old fiddle," he went on, patting it affectionately, "and one very *mauvais quart d'heure*—whereby hangs a tale. You want to

hear it? all right, it is short enough to be told before the dressing-bell rings."

He pushed the cigar-stand towards me, and began :—

Fifteen years ago I spent two pleasant autumn months rambling on foot through the highways and byways of the Apennines, with no luggage but a knapsack, and no companion but my violin.

What strange places I visited, what strange people I met, what

scenes of unexplored loveliness were revealed to me in those mountain solitudes, I have not time to tell. I must come at once to a certain October evening, when, just after sunset, I was toiling up the steep ascent to the little hillside town of San' Benedetto, where I was to pass the night.

A town it called itself, but it was in fact little more than a village; its one long street of grey, sundried stone houses straggling up the hill, which was crowned by a ruined citadel.

Its only inn—"The *Albergo d'Italia*, kept by Leone Rosso"—stood at the entrance to the town, apart from the other dwellings. In front was a strip of parched and dusty turf, while at the back the ground sloped steeply down to the bed of a mountain stream.

The house, with its deepset windows barred like a prison, its low-browed arched doorway, and its general air of neglect and decay, was as ill-favoured a habitation as I had ever beheld. Nor did its owner's physiognomy please me much better, if it were indeed the landlord who lounged in the doorway with his hands in his pockets. A short, thickset, powerfully built man of middle age, with a heavy jaw, and eyes at once fierce and sullen.

However, as it was a case of Hobson's choice, there being no other hostelries in the place but small wine-shops, I approached and addressed him: "Can I have a bed for the night, here?" He looked me over at his leisure before replying, taking a disparaging survey of my person and accoutrements, from my dusty boots and battered felt hat, to my well-worn knapsack and violin case.

"I suppose so," he answered, grudgingly, and drew back to allow me to enter.

The large dimly-lit apartment in which I found myself, seemed to do duty for kitchen, café and restaurant combined. Its only occupants were a wizened, witch-like old woman, evidently my host's mother, and an untidy servant-girl, who were engaged together in some mysterious cooking operations, which gave forth an ambrosial odour of garlic and fried fat.

The master said a few words in an undertone to his mother, who, having favoured me with a stare and a nod over her shoulder, resumed her occupation, while her son flung himself on to a low seat near the hearth, and produced his pipe.

"Will you kindly show me my room, and let me have supper?" I said, finding that no one took any further notice of me.

"The supper is ready, but the room is not," the old woman rejoined tartly. "Ludovica will arrange it presently."

"Meantime, where can I wash my hands?" I inquired, unfastening my knapsack. She looked at me with a sour smile.

"The signore is English, evidently," she remarked, as if that accounted for the eccentricity of such a request, and raising her voice, called, shrilly—"Tonio!"

Ever since I entered the house, I had heard from an inner room

the faint notes of a violin; a primitive instrument, evidently, and touched by an untutored hand, which yet was skilful enough to extract from it some tones of plaintive and penetrating sweetness.

As the music still continued, she repeated the call, and her son echoed it roughly, with the accompaniment of an oath. The melody broke off abruptly, and a boy emerged from the inner door, a slender fragile-looking lad of fifteen, with a delicate sensitive face, and great dark eyes, which had the pathetic appealing look of an ill-used animal.

"Stop that cursed caterwauling, and come when you are called," the man said, harshly. "I shall break that fiddle over your head some day. The signore wants water to wash his hands. Fetch it."

The lad promptly obeyed, and I performed my summary ablutions at a corner of the long kitchen dresser.

"So it was you who were playing so sweetly just now?" I said, smiling at him as I dried my hands. "I need not ask if you are fond of music?"

"I love it," he murmured, "but I can't play; I never learnt. The signore is a musician?" he added wistfully, noticing my violin-case. I nodded.

"Would you like to try my violin?" I asked. "Play to me while I am at supper—I like to hear you."

He glanced timidly at the master, who grunted, but made no objection, and retreating to the furthest corner of the room, took out the instrument with infinite care, and lightly drew the bow across the strings. I was watching his face, and as the first clear mellow note rang out, I saw a sudden light flash over it.

"Oh—!" he gasped, and stopped short, looking at me in a sort of rapturous surprise.

"Rather a different tone to yours, isn't it?" I said smiling. "Don't be afraid of it. Play!"

The lad needed no second telling. He was soon lost to himself and his surroundings, pouring out his whole heart in a strange wild improvisation. Never, before or since, have I heard a performance like that. It was as if a soul had suddenly become articulate; a martyred soul, repressed and blighted by its uncongenial environment.

Absorbed in listening, I forgot to eat, and when at last the music ceased, my eyes were wet with tears. I turned to the master of the house, who sat, stolid and unmoved, puffing at his pipe.

"That boy is a born musician," I said, emphatically; "if he has proper instruction he may——"

"Get his living by fiddling at fairs," he put in, with a rude laugh. "*Mille grazie!* We have had one ne'er-do-well in the family—his father; and that is quite enough."

Tonio looked up quickly. "My father was not—" he began.

"Your father was a spendthrift and a ne'er-do-well," his uncle

repeated; "who died a pauper, and left his only son to live on charity."

The lad flushed to the roots of his dark hair. "If my father was a 'spendthrift,'" he retorted fearlessly, "it is not for you to reproach him. You had your share of his money while it lasted, and when it was gone, you turned him out to die like a dog. As to my living on charity," he pursued bitterly, "Heaven knows I work hard enough for the bread I eat, and the roof that covers me. No hired servant would submit to the insult and ill-usage which you——"

"Will you be silent—*maladetto*!" Rosso interrupted savagely, and starting from his seat, he lifted his hand to strike him.

It was fortunate that I interposed in time, for the blow which fell on my arm was heavy enough to have broken that for which it was intended.

The look of passionate gratitude the boy gave me I shall not soon forget.

"Oh, signore!" he faltered, "you are hurt—and for me!"

I silenced him by a gesture.

"Come, we must have no quarrelling," I said. "Give us some more music, my boy, to restore harmony."

He shook his head.

"I can play no more to-night, the music is gone out of me," he answered sadly, as he restored the violin to its case. "I thank you a hundred times, signore, for the pleasure you have given me. I understand now," he added quaintly, "why the old painters make their angels play the violin. Such a one as this is indeed worthy to make music in heaven. I suppose——" he hesitated "I suppose it cost a great deal of money?"

"That is a Stradivarius; it cost eight hundred pounds—twenty thousand *lire*."

Rosso paused in the act of filling his pipe, and looked round at me incredulously.

"Twenty thousand *lire* for a fiddle!"

"*Sì, sì!*" the boy asserted eagerly. "I have heard that violins by that maker cost a fortune now. He died nearly two hundred years ago, and no one can make them as he did. He gave a soul to the wood and strings."

The man looked at me oddly, as he stuffed tobacco into his pipe.

"Twenty thousand *lire*!" he muttered, "your excellency must be a millionaire; to spend so much money on a superfluity."

"But the signore is a musician," Tonio answered for me; "his violin is not a superfluity, but a necessary—*non e vero*, signore?"

I left the question unanswered, and hastened to change the subject. I did not quite relish the turn the conversation had taken, and I liked still less the curious furtive looks my host now cast at me from time to time, as if he were revolving in his mind some new and pregnant idea.

I noticed also that he and the old woman exchanged glances, and

once she crossed the hearth to hold a whispered conference with him, which, I could not help seeing, referred to myself.

I felt vaguely uncomfortable, and wished, more than once, that I could have found quarters for the night elsewhere.

It was too late to seek them now, however, and as the evening was advanced, and I was tired and drowsy, I presently asked to be taken to my room.

Tonio sprang up to light me, but his uncle thrust him aside.

"Carry the knapsack—thou," he said, taking the lamp from his hand, and preceded me up the staircase, and along an icy-cold, draughty stone corridor to the chamber allotted to me.

It was a large, bleak, inhospitable room, with a tiled floor and frescoed ceiling, containing no furniture but a bed, a washing-stand, two chairs, and a table, and no ornaments save a ghastly old picture of the Crucifixion, and a vessel for holy water—dry. Its barred window looked down on the ravine at the back of the house. My landlord closed the casement, trimmed the flickering oil-lamp, and dismissing Tonio with a nod, turned to me.

"Your Excellency leaves to-morrow?" he said, with a sudden change of manner from rudeness to servility, which struck me as sinister. I assented.

"Your Excellency is travelling quite alone?"

"I am alone now, as you perceive," I answered, shortly, "but I expect to meet friends at Arezzo."

"Arezzo? Ah, Arezzo is a long way off," he remarked, with a peculiar intonation. "The roads are rough, and not always safe for lonely travellers."

"I do not travel unarmed," I returned, and taking my revolver from my pocket, I placed it, with ostentatious carelessness, on the table near the window.

"A wise precaution," he rejoined, with an equivocal smile. "Well, I wish you a good-night, *Excellenza*, and pleasant dreams."

He had got as far as the door, when he turned as if recollecting something.

"I forgot to see if the window was properly fastened," he explained, and after fumbling with it for a moment, pronounced all safe, and retired.

I drew a breath of relief when he was gone, then locked the door, and having by a careful survey of the room ascertained that there was no other means of entrance, I felt somewhat reassured.

Resolving, however, to be on the alert, I threw myself, dressed as I was, on the bed, leaving the lamp burning. I had not realised before I lay down how tired I was, so tired that even the sense of possible danger could not long keep me awake. Sleep fell upon me unawares—a deep dreamless sleep which must have lasted several hours.

What woke me? I did not know. I seemed to glide back im-

perceptibly to consciousness, lingering for a few blissful moments on the dim borderland between sleep and waking.

Drowsily listening, I heard the monotonous murmur of the stream in the ravine below, but it seemed to mingle with another sound within the room—as if someone were lightly touching the strings of a violin close to my ear.

The lamp had burnt out, and the chamber was only dimly lighted by the rising moon. As I stirred and half raised myself, a hand was placed softly on my lips, and a voice murmured :

"Hush, it is I—Tonio ! I wanted to wake you gently, that you might not cry out."

"What is it ? What has happened ?" I whispered.

He put his lips to my ear. "You are in danger. The *padrone* is plotting to rob, perhaps to murder you. I heard him talking just now to the grandmother. He thinks you are a rich man ; he suspects that you have money about you. Besides, there is the violin. In another moment he will be here."

"But the door is locked."

"The door is not locked, or how could I have got in ? The lock has been tampered with. And your revolver is gone," he added. "My uncle took it when he returned to fasten the window. Up, quick, signore ! Here is your knapsack and violin ! There is not a moment to be lost."

"But what can I do ?" I questioned. "Unarmed, I am helpless ; caught like a rat in a trap !"

"No, there is a way of escape, if you are quick and bold enough. We shall hear him coming along the corridor. You must stand here, close against the wall, and directly he opens the door, make a rush for it. Throw yourself on him and trip him up, if possible, then follow me, and I will see you safe out of the house. If"—he broke off with a start. "He is coming," he breathed ; "are you ready ?"

"Quite ready," I answered grimly, a pleasant sense of excitement tingling in all my veins.

The boy had taken his stand at my side, and his slender hand—cold, but firm and steady, gripped mine in the darkness.

We stood, with suspended breath, watching the door. Slowly, cautiously, silently, it opened inwards, and Rosso's villainous figure appeared on the threshold.

I was prepared to spring on him the moment he set foot in the room, but quick as I was, Tonio was quicker.

With reckless daring he literally flung himself on the murderous villain who, startled by this unexpected attack, staggered back, lost his balance, and fell heavily to the stone floor, where he lay like a log, stunned and motionless.

"Follow me—quick !" my companion cried, scrambling to his feet, for he had fallen with the other.

Brushing past the old woman who was lurking at the end of the

corridor, he led the way downstairs, across the kitchen, and out at a back door.

I have a vague recollection that we hurried through a neglected garden, and down a steep rocky slope to the stony bed of the stream, over which a few planks were thrown. Up the opposite bank we climbed, among rocks and bushes, and finally, to my surprise and relief, found ourselves in the broad high-road, which crossed the ravine by a stone bridge, half-a-mile lower down. Then, and not till then, we paused to take breath.

Looking back, we could see the inn on the opposite bank, dark and silent.

"You are safe now; he will not dare to follow you," my companion panted; "besides, I believe he is badly hurt."

"He has his deserts," I returned. "But what is to become of you, my boy? You cannot go back to that cut-throat's den."

"I have nowhere else to go," he answered forlornly.

I laid my hand on his shoulder.

"Come with me!" I exclaimed. "You have saved my life, and I will do my best to make yours happy. You shall learn music, and who knows? you may be a great artist, some day."

He clasped his hands, looking up at me as if hardly daring to believe his ears.

"Signore—you do not mean it! You will take me away with you—now, at once?"

"This very moment, if you will come. We will go together to Arezzo, and thence to Rome. You shall turn your back for ever on the old life, and begin a new and happier one. Look, the day is breaking, it is a good omen."

He glanced towards the east, where the "awful rose of dawn" was slowly unfolding. His face, transfigured by that supernatural light, reminded me of one of Fra Angelico's boy angels. Then he turned to me, and—But why should I try to repeat the words in which he poured out his joy and gratitude? I could not do justice to his simple eloquence. It is enough to say that we went on our way together, mutually satisfied with the arrangement, and three days later we were at Florence.

At this point, the dressing-bell sounded, and my friend paused.

"But that is not the end of the story?" I exclaimed. "You have not told me what became of your young *protégé*. Did he fulfil your expectations, is he a great artist?"

Danescourt shook his head sadly.

"He would have been had he lived, but—Antonio Cherici was one of those whom the gods love. He has long since been 'making music in heaven.'"

AN OLD WESTMINSTER.

THE wind was whistling in Dean's Yard, driving before it a few spirts of fine rain, and great tatters of cloud were scudding across a stormy sky. The washed pavement shimmered in the fitful moonbeams, and the gutters flashed cheerfully with runnels of escaping water. Carriages were drawing up in file at the school-gate, lamps shone, and horses pranced and chafed, and a nameless alertness and sense of expectation seemed to hover about the quiet Abbey precincts and to have startled the venerable calm of the school buildings.

At the door a spruce monitor stood to receive the company, and bowed them into the court and across the flags. Ladies in white and men going gingerly on tiptoe hurried before the gale.

Yet in passing many a man half paused to cast a glance on the scene, now almost forgotten, once familiar as home.

It was here we used to jump after morning school, and Charley Hill—dead now, poor fellow—beat all comers for three halves running with eighteen foot nine. That was the best wall for fives; they have spoilt it now. Yonder Brooks minor had the fight with Jervis, and licked him at the end of four and thirty rounds; they fell side by side in the Khyber ten years ago. What happy days those were, when we hardly knew our happiness, and what a bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked pack of lads spring again from the dim background of memory and again crowd the playground whooping and whistling, tossing caps in air, giving the sturdy back or fielding the bounding ball. *Eheu! fugaces Postume!* We are all old boys now. Half of us are gone, and we who are left are but rusty and stiff. Let us get out of the wind and climb upstairs to the dormitory.

We jostled our way up the stairs and between the two files of cubicles to the dormitory entrance, and presented our tickets to the two trim monitors, who were masters of the ceremonies.

What a sweet self-sufficiency there is about a youth in this situation. In all the dignity of a tail coat and a tall collar, white gloves, cane, cap and gown, these young gentlemen demand of us our title to be there with gentle imperviousness, and protectingly beckon or bow us forward according to our sex or charms. Not without some faint traces of bashfulness do these young heroes of the upper school bear themselves in their office, but they are visibly supported by a consciousness of their own eminence amid those minnows, the lower-form boys, who, glorious in the crestest of coats and the broadest of collars, are suffered on these occasions to be wideawake when on ordinary nights they should be asleep and dreaming.

Packed on the highest benches of the gallery, close under the roof,

they sit nowadays—for once it was not so—in a close phalanx of rosy faces and bright eyes, obedient to the monitor posted in front of them, each with the cane of his office.

At every well-known cue in the piece, where applause may well come in to approve the sentiment or reward the actor, these young gentlemen in authority lift and gently wave their canes on high, and straightway their watchful myrmidons burst out with the hearty clapping and boisterous cheering of lusty youth, and keep it up as long as they see the cane a-moving in the air.

It is an innocent and transparent *claque*, a little puzzling at first to the outside world, which wonders how it comes about that Latin verses, which oldsters find somewhat hard to catch, let alone to construe, should be caught up so rapturously and relished with so much gusto by lads scarce old enough to have made a year's acquaintance with the accidence.

The device soon betrays itself, but he must be a sullen churl indeed who grudges the actors this disciplined approbation, carps at the loyal clapping of the little men. Bless their fresh young hearts! They may understand more Latin and see better acting as they grow older, but they will never throb with keener sympathy or rejoice with more unalloyed joy, or realise, alas, how bright are these boyish days, until they are gone for ever into the dim unapproachable limbo of a fading and half-forgotten past.

There came crawling along to the foot of the gallery stairs, and painfully dragging himself up them by the bannisters a singular and deplorable apparition.

A man, thick of figure and yet feeble, bulky but with an air of famine, tottering but not aged, white-haired and unreverend, old but not stricken in years. An unkempt stubble of beard disfigured his pallid cheeks, the hue of drunkenness was on his face, and his eyes, vivid still and blazing, were fevered, wandering, and bloodshot. He was dressed in garments of the last degree of shabbiness. He propped himself with a rough stick, and his breath came pantingly and hard, and when he gained the top of the steps he stood still unsteadily, unable to speak, and groped for his pocket with palsied fingers.

The pert monitor stared at him in some perplexity. So indecorous a figure seemed strangely out of place among the trim boys and seemly company which crowded the occasional theatre to do honour to the Westminster Play. Yet the man had none of the air of an intruder, and although feeble and uncertain, he was not in any way abashed to find into what place he had stumbled. He had the air of being in his right in taking his place there.

The monitor winked at the other lads, and feigning to bar the way, said to the old man with a quaintly assumed civility of office:

“Pray, sir, are you a gentleman of the press?”

The stranger turned on him a gaze, vacant at first, but suddenly brightening up into a stare of most uncomfortable piercingness and self-assurance. With a hand that seemed to move somewhat rustily and at random, he slowly disinterred from the mysterious recesses of his waistcoat a ticket of admission, and presented it to the monitor with an air of faded dignity.

"Young gentleman!" said he, in a hoarse voice, but with the accent of a man of breeding, "you seem to have forgotten how the verb *vapulo* is conjugated. I am too old and too feeble to teach you the lesson, so you win a cheap victory over me, but it brings you little credit."

And moving past the crest-fallen Jack-in-office, halting and scant o' breath, he at length placed himself in a good seat some two or three rows in front of me.

The head master's party came in and was applauded with the innocent adulation of the lads behind me. The head-boy, glorious in gown and breeches and silk stockings, delivered the prologue and was envied by the young boys in his audience for his greatness and his age, and by the old ones for his simplicity and his youth, and presently, after much punctilious asking and giving of leave between the headmaster and the players, the curtain went up and the "Adelphi" began.

Who has not seen that quaint representation, mixture of unreal revival and of ancient school usage, and listened to the familiar half-forgotten Latin, and found a staleness in the jokes and wondered privately that his Latinity should have become so mouldy?

After all we go to see the actors, not the play. They threw themselves into their work so shamefacedly and yet with such earnestness. Some are so uncouth and awkward in their business; others wave their arms and thump their sticks with such carefully tutored zeal. From behind an old man's grey beard pipes out a boyish treble, purposeful and vehement; and the gallant young Athenian buck delivers himself of his airy jests and rakish colloquy in a great gruff voice, the proud but still discomforting distinction of a top boy of seventeen.

How beautiful that Athenian back-scene used to shine in our eyes! how splendid were the dresses of Chremes and Clitipho and the rest! how rapt the youngsters are with it all still! and how the benches of older folks study to look interested and yawn furtively behind their hands, and take privy peeps at watches, and wish the epilogue were near.

For my part I soon grew tired of the play. To begin with, my scholarship is not what it was, nor was ever what it should be; and besides, I think the wine of Terence's wit had never much body in it, and has now become but a thin and perished tippie. I do not myself much affect antiquarian vintage, and cannot console myself for a present ill-savour in the mouth by reflecting on the bygone genera-

tions who relished it. So I soon began to look at the people and not at the piece.

The odd figure in front of me was following the play with single-hearted earnestness and avidity. With his hand arched behind his ear, he greedily caught up every syllable that fell from the actor's lips. His eye drank in every gesture, every change of posture or position, every motion of the dresses, every inch of the scenery. At every point the lads made he beat his stick upon the floor and vociferated a husky "*bravo!*" He missed not a joke, and laughed a long and loud—but ah! how melancholy and mirthless a laugh—at every well-worn pleasantry. The *claque* of little boys behind was not more punctual and hearty in its applause than he, and while the act lasted he, who had seemed half a mummy as he came in, was restored to life and animation and almost to happiness. But as each act finished and the people got up to stretch themselves and look about and see and be seen, his head drooped forward upon his hand and his whole figure fell in and lost all elasticity; and once, when he stooped to pick up his stick, which he chanced to have dropped, I surprised the tears stealing down his cheeks.

At length the play was over and the epilogue done, and the accustomed cap was passed down from the stage and about the benches for "salt."

This is a part of the ceremony which some of the spectators perhaps are apt to think superfluous or importunate, and men are more likely to ignore it and feign to busy themselves with their wraps and their acquaintance than to it and clamour to contribute.

But to my wonder this strange fellow, who looked fitter to ask than to give an alms, elbowed his painful way through the crowd, thrust himself into the thickest of the press and the highest of the grandees, literally chased and caught the cap, and as I followed, curious to see what all this eagerness might mean, I saw him unwrap from a scrap of paper, in which he had it folded, a solitary sovereign and drop it into the cap with a shaking hand.

Then he turned away as if he had done, and slowly hobbled off, until, quitting the school and turning out into Dean's Yard, I lost sight of him battling feebly against the gusts of wind and seeming to cower defenceless under the onslaught of the driving rain.

"Lawson," I said to a friend, one of the masters who has known the school man and boy these five and forty years, "who is that extraordinary old scarecrow? He's not the kind of person one expects to see on an occasion like this, though in all conscience one sees odd enough folks here—as motley a crew as you could gather together in any one room in England. Is he your skeleton at the feast, or what?"

"He is old Captain Killigrew," said Lawson. "I daresay there are not half-a-dozen men in the room, aye! or perhaps in the world, who would remember him. Poor wretch! He is one of the most

friendless of men. Twenty-two years ago—for he isn't really old—there was no more handsome, dashing, gallant young fellow in all London than he. He was a distinguished King's scholar here. I recollect his repeating the epilogue nine and twenty years since—dear! dear! how the time flies—with the grace of a young Apollo. He got a commission in the Guards, and for three or four years London was at his feet. He was kind-hearted, pleasant-spoken, well set up, free and frank and honourable as a Knight of the Round Table. He had good means, good wits, and good manners; men liked him, women loved him; he kept his head, enjoyed life thoroughly, and seemed to have nothing to wish for and nothing to regret.

“Suddenly, not very clearly or noticeably, he began to go wrong. He looked worn and uneasy; his tone became bold and hard; he made enemies, he lost friends; presently he became *déclassé*; people began to look askance at him at his clubs; he dropped bit by bit out of society, he plunged on the turf and lost money; he played cards and lost more; there was a scandal about baccarat and he quitted the regiment; and then all was over and down he went. It was the old story. Some woman began it and he lost faith; he gamed to distract himself, became a beggar and lost hope; he drank to obtain oblivion and he passed beyond the reach of charity. There was some miserable pittance remaining to him out of the wreck, and on that he makes shift to live. The old chap is as proud as Lucifer; he won't accept aid or pity from any one; he was so afraid of being cut by his old friends, that he began by cutting them himself all round. The only favour that ever he asks is his order for the play, and he won't accept even that except on the hardest terms. Nothing but a bare gallery seat will do; he sends back a better order if you give him one, and the old fellow scrapes and hoards till he makes up a sovereign for salt, and gives to his old school in a moment what I suppose is a fiftieth part of his year's income. He lives in a garret in Lambeth; he eats nothing but bread and almost lives on tobacco; aye! and on gin—or perhaps I should say he dies upon gin. He's changed a good deal since last year. I doubt if he can last long now.”

Lawson's rather callous prediction came sharply home to me when next I saw Killigrew, which was about six weeks after the play. He looked terribly wasted and ill; winter was evidently telling on him most severely.

I had nothing much to do that day, and I began listlessly to follow the forlorn creature, hoping that chance might throw in my way some opportunity of gaining his acquaintance, and offering him help.

He crawled very slowly along, and not seldom stopped altogether; and if the bitter wind pierced him as it pierced me, Heaven help the poor wretch! He was not walking however like a man who is merely passing the time. He peered about, as if retracing some long unfamiliar road, and in spite of occasional hesitation, pursued a very steady and deliberate course. He worked his way across

Belgravia into Grosvenor Place, affronted undauntedly the files of vehicles at Apsley House, turned into South Audley Street, and at length came to a stand, in front of a house in Curzon Street, of no very particular pretensions. For some time he stood looking at it very earnestly, and presently as I drew nearer, thinking him fallen ill, I saw his features working fearfully, and could hear him under his breath, anathematising with a terrible intensity of hatred someone whom he once or twice called "Louise," and once "my lady," and then, in a tempest of fury, her whole family and all the race of women, and the house and the street, and the very stones and the clouds above him, and last of all himself, and the black day on which he was born.

He leant against the area railings, quite spent and shaking, and at last tottered down a mews and into a public-house, whence he emerged in a while looking furtively round the corners. From Curzon Street he bent his way, not so steadily now, towards Piccadilly, tacked across the Green park, which was swept by the blustering wind like a battle-field by artillery, booming at one with hoarse reports, and striking the cheeks with sharp stinging blows, and eventually he brought up against the railings of the Wellington Barracks.

A battalion of the Guards was being paraded and two or three field officers were riding to and fro. Here I could get near him unobserved, and again I found him overcome by emotion. This time he did not say anything, but he sobbed tearlessly and heavily, and at last feebly raising a shaky hand, he saluted and turned away down St. James Street, with the tears dropping down his withered cheeks.

He went slowly on until he arrived at Westminster School, and then, as the boys were not yet come back from the holidays, he began to go round the playground, lingering fondly here and there, shading his bleared eyes to read names which were written on the walls, and visibly renewing, with an old man's recollections, the days of a happy and hopeful boyhood. It was as though he had been taking a last farewell of scenes once loved.

The bells were ringing for service in the Abbey and he turned in and crept into a stall. There was but a scanty congregation, but the day was dark, and though I found a seat not far off him, I could see him but dimly. The earlier part of the service he followed very devoutly, and once I heard a quavering voice petitioning "forgive us our trespasses," which I knew must be his. The anthem was, "Sing ye comfortably to Sion," and beautifully it was sung. He listened with intense earnestness and his head bent lower and lower, and at the words "for her warfare is accomplished . . . is accomplished," I saw his hand steal to his eyes and cover them. He fell on his knees at the end of the anthem, and was kneeling still when the Blessing had been given and the rest of us rose. The slight bustle of departure was heard, but he remained motionless. A suspicion awoke in me. "I think that gentleman is ill," I said to the verger, "we had better see," and we went over to him. He was dead.

THE CHURCHYARD BY THE FEN.

IN a little country churchyard which adjoins the dreary fen,
Far remote from noisy cities and the lives of busy men,
I was wandering late in autumn, on a still but sunless day,
And a misty, pall-like vapour over all the valley lay;
No breeze there was to stir the branches, but the oak-leaves quivered
down,

Covering up the mildewed tombstones with a cloak of russet brown.
So I stood and idly wondered as I scanned each mouldering stone,
What the name, and what the fortune of its occupant unknown.
How had he fulfilled his duty, unit in the mighty plan?
Had he in his lowly station borne his burthen like a man—
Loving husband, friendly neighbour? So I wondered as I read,
As a stranger who knows nothing of the living or the dead.
Perchance such poor memorials feebly bridge for us the mighty vast,
For our sympathies are wakened by such relics of the past
More than by heraldic blazon, statues with their stony eyes
Watching o'er the mighty ashes of forgotten centuries.

Suddenly my dreams were scattered and a flood of memories came,
Early hopes and youthful friendships, and the long-forgotten name
Of a friend who in life's springtime linked his ardent hopes with mine,
Budding hopes that were to blossom 'neath the ripening hand of time.
Had he reaped his youth's fair promise, wreathed his temples with the
bay,

Or perchance achieved contentment in some lowlier, happier way?
Naught I knew, our ways had severed, all alone our fate we met—
Then my glance fell idly downwards on the tombstone at my feet.
It was mildewed and deserted, with lush verdure overgrown,
Loving hands ne'er placed a wreath there, loving lips ne'er uttered
moan.

Hapless stranger, none to mourn thee! Then the lines I slowly trace—
'Twas my friend who slept beneath me, *this* ambition's resting-place!

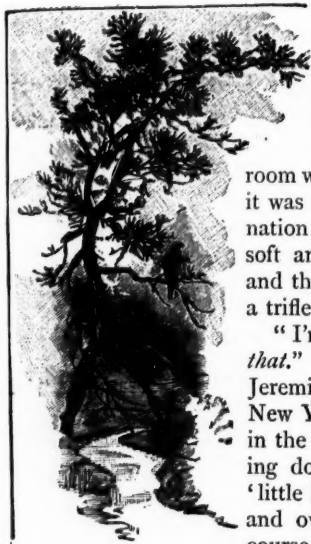
* * * * *

There in a neglected grave upon the margin of the fen,
Far remote from all who loved him, outcast from his fellow-men,
Resteth he unknown, unhonoured; all he ever gained from fame
Burial in a village churchyard, and a tombstone with his name!
He had loved, perchance unwisely, and his spirit felt the sting;
Or dishonour's breath had soiled him, making life a hideous thing?
So he crept away in silence, with his untold misery,
As a lion seeks the desert, there in solitude to die.
But when once my wandering footsteps led me to that churchyard drear,
Sure his spirit took me to him craving for one friendly tear!
Overhead the dripping branches moaned, the oak-leaves quivered down,
Covering up the mildewed tombstones with a cloak of russet-brown.

H. ST. A. DENTON.

A CLEVER CHAPERON.

I.



TWO ladies were seated, deep in confidential conversation, in a yellow plush *causeuse* in the drawing-room of the *Cosmopolitan Hotel*, not a hundred miles from Charing Cross.

At that hour of the afternoon the room was quite deserted, and it was as well that it was so, for the two ladies belonged to that nation which does not seem to think "a voice soft and low an excellent thing in woman," and they were exchanging confidences in tones a trifle loud and harsh.

"I'm worried about her, Amanda; I am *that*," The speaker was Mrs. Jeffers, wife of Jeremiah Jeffers, millionaire-proprietor of the *New York Oracle*, a very *passée* beauty dressed in the latest style. "I'm sick of this 'preaching down a daughter's heart' business. My 'little hoard of maxims' have been spent over and over again, and all to no purpose. Of course she obeys me and her poppa in the

letter, and never holds any communication with the young man or his people, but not in the *spirit*. She's refused some real good offers, and I believe she's fretting, little fool that she is."

"Looks like it, certainly," assented Mrs. Vanderstump, cousin by marriage to Mrs. Jeffers, and about fifteen years her junior. "She doesn't look so bright as a young girl should. Fancy an American girl pining for love! Didn't think such a thing possible. But you haven't really told me the particulars of the affair, and how it began."

"It began in Belle's school-days. You remember we sent her over to London to school—a very swell school at Kensington. There were three daughters of baronets and two peers' daughters among the pupils. Of course I and Jeremiah hoped she'd make some nice friends—that was our chief reason for sending her; *that* and to get the English accent. And what must the ridiculous girl do but start one of those nonsensical youthful friendships with a mere nobody, the daughter of a country clergyman. She wrote home to New York on one or two occasions to know if she might spend the holidays with these people, and we gave permission. From Belle's letters I inferred

that there were only the parson and his wife and daughter in family. But girls are deep and sly, even *American* girls, who ought to know better. The old couple had a son, the girl a brother. He was a medical student then, walking one of the great London hospitals. From the first day he met our Belle staying as a guest at his home he seems to have begun to make love to her. Well, that's natural enough, but it's not quite so natural that he should think he could *marry* her, with her beauty and fortune and the wide world to choose from. Nor was it natural that Belle, at seventeen years of age, should be such an idiot as to fall in love with a beggar and consent to a clandestine engagement. It had been going on for some months, the sister aiding and abetting them in seeing each other in London, and carrying letters from one to the other, when the parson found out what was going on, and wrote a very gentlemanlike letter to us in New York informing us. Jeremiah and I were just about to start for Europe, and meant to take Belle away from school, anyhow, so it didn't alter our plans. I gave the silly child a good scolding, and let the young man and his people know that an engagement was out of the question. But I wasn't prepared for the scene Belle made when she and I were alone. Sobbing and crying and declaring if she couldn't marry him she would never marry at all."

"You must have had a terrible time of it, Jennie," said Mrs. Vanderstump.

"I had that, Amanda. That's eighteen months ago, and since then we've been travelling about Europe, staying here and there, as you know, and though she's not seen or heard anything of these people, she's still fretting over the absurd affair. She refused a real good offer in Rome last winter, the Count di Castello Antico. I cried with vexation. As I said before, Amanda, I'm worried and bothered past endurance. I'd take her right back to the States to-morrow, and try what her native air would do to bring her to her senses, but Jeremiah has to be in Europe till spring; business will keep him backwards and forwards between here, Paris, and Vienna, and I want to be with him; though as long as we're in London I'm trembling all the time lest she should meet this fellow. He's not a medical student now, I suppose, but likely he's set up a practice in the city or somewhere around."

"It's a fix for you, Jennie," said Mrs. Vanderstump, sympathetically. Then, after a few moments' thoughtfulness: "What d'you say to letting Belle come back with me? I'm going to cross right now, for, as I told you, Jasper cables that he won't be able to fetch me. We should be just in time for the New York season, and after a couple of months in Fiftieth Street I'd take her south to our place at New Orleans for some more gaiety, and by the time you and Jeremiah discover America next spring, her young medical beau would have taken a header into the waters of Lethe, and she would be as well engaged as even *you* could wish."

Mrs. Jeffers took her companion's hands in effusive gratitude.

"My dear girl, you are my good angel! It's what I've been thinking of, but I hardly liked to ask such a favour! If anything could cure her of this absurd obstinate fancy, it would be your society, and your delightful circle in New York. You've got such a name, too, for being a clever chaperon, though you're only a young wife yourself. Your own sisters have married so well, thanks to having stayed with you in Fiftieth Street."

"They have *that*! Yes, I've settled that crowd creditably, though I say it myself. I'm a real chaperon, and Belle will meet none but the best people with me, as you know, Jennie; she'll meet no undesirable *partis* under my wing and then she *can't* make a *mésalliance*. As Lord Tennyson says: 'Don't exactly *marry* dollars, but go where dollars are,' or something to that effect."

"I really have no words to thank you, Amanda. Only take her off my hands for a few months and cure her of this wretched folly, and Jeremiah and I will give you the loveliest diamond necklet that can be bought for money."

"Agreed, Jennie! I undertake to give you back next spring an improved Belle, warranted to waste no thoughts on poor nobodies; and to give you also a highly advantageous prospective son-in-law—either a member of one of our first families, or a genuine solid swell of foreign manufacture! Here come Belle and her poppa," she added; and the ladies' confidential chat ceased as a good-natured, middle-aged man and a lovely fair-haired girl entered the room.

II.

MRS. JASPER VANDERSTUMP to MRS. JEREMIAH JEFFERS.

"SS. *Titanic*—off Queenstown.
"Nov. 3rd, '93.

"MY DEAR JENNIE.—Just a line, as I promised, though it's as much as I can do to hold a pen, for I'm the wretchedest sailor imaginable; and as soon as we feel the full roll of the pond, I shall cave-in altogether. Belle feels rather cheap, too, at present, but she says she's never ill more than a day or two. I, on the other hand, have to keep my room the whole trip, generally. There seem to be a good number of saloon passengers, but none that we know, I believe. *Au revoir*. Love to Jeremiah.

"Your affectionate

"AMANDA VANDERSTUMP."

A couple of days after writing this, when the *Titanic* was three days out, Mrs. Vanderstump lay moaning and fretting on the sofa of the bright little bed-sitting state-room which she shared with Belle Jeffers. It was between seven and eight in the evening; dinner was in progress

in the saloon; a stewardess had just carried away the remains of Mrs. V.'s lonely little invalid meal, consisting of a stewed sweetbread and a brandy-and-soda.

"What a *detestable* thing sea-sickness is," moaned the lady; "I could have a real good time on board-ship if I weren't so wretchedly ill always! I just have to be a miserable hermit from Fire Island to the Fastnet, and from the Fastnet to Fire Island. There's Belle all right again now, and it's another worry to think she may be striking up a flirtation with some ineligible young fellow among the passengers. I don't know though—Belle's not very much of a flirt—this foolish romance of hers keeps her a bit prim and serious. So much the better, as far as the *voyage* is concerned; but once settled in Fiftieth Street with *me*, my dear, and mixing in my lively set, and there'll be no *arrière pensée*, take my word. Ugh!" and overcome by a sudden qualm, she raised her bottle of smelling-salts feebly to her *retroussé* little nose.

The door of the state-room was opened here, and Belle came in with a rush, impelled by a sudden lurch of the ship.

"How bright you look!" said Mrs. Vanderstump, fretfully. "I declare, you look happier already for being under my wing! I guess I *have* an extraordinary gift for chaperoning young girls and making them happy, though I'm only a girl in *years* myself. Dinner over in the saloon?"

Belle said "yes." She certainly did look much brighter than when we last saw her in the London hotel, as she sat on the edge of the lower berth, holding one of its curtains to steady herself, for the Atlantic was inclined to be playful to-night.

"Ugh! It's nice to be you, Belle! Able to be up and about, to go to the *table d'hôte* and wear a decent dinner-gown, while I have to lie here in this dismal old dressing-gown day after day, as if I were a hundred years old!"

"It's not a particularly dismal old dressing-gown, Amanda, anyhow!" said Belle, looking at the dainty "confection" worn by her chaperon. Mrs. Vanderstump made an impatient gesture as she sniffed again at her salts.

"Each time I cross and have these wretched feelings, I vow I'll never cross again! But when I'm on land I forget 'em, and make engagements to go to Europe as if I were the best sailor in the world. Who have you been talking to, Belle, the two days that you've been up and about?"

"I've talked to the ladies in the opposite room," answered Belle, demurely.

"I don't want to hear *that*, child! What men have you talked to?"

"I've talked to the brother of the ladies opposite. Their name is Worthington, and they hail from Baltimore. They know the Dwights, of Fifth Avenue."

"Do they? They're people of some position, then, I reckon. Who else have you talked to?"

"Well, I've chatted a little with the man who sits next me at table." (Belle rose and arranged her fair fluffy hair at the glass on the wall). "He turns out to be the ship's doctor," she added.

"Is he young?" queried Mrs. Vanderstump, sharply.

Belle pinned down a self-willed curl with a snow-pin. "He's something under sixty, I guess," she answered.

"Oh, he's safe enough, then. You *may* talk to him! And I certainly sha'n't call him in professionally as the stewardess has been advising. I'm suffering from simple *mal de mer*; nothing but these strong smelling-salts will alleviate the symptoms, and nothing but dry land will effect a cure. Still, if the doctor had been young and handsome, I might have thought an opinion advisable. Ah!—oh!"

Mrs. Vanderstump's liveliness was quenched in a faint moan and she lay speechless.

"The doctor has offered to show me the engine-room and the steering-gear," said Belle. "They're considered wonderful. There's nothing like them on other ships—the engines and the steering-gear, I mean. It's a new departure in marine engineering."

"Law, child! How you talk! Don't be so technical and correct! The men don't care for it! For *my* part, I have *no* opinion of the engines and the steering-gear on this or any other liner! And until the engineers and ship-builders invent something to prevent this dreadful rolling, I shall reckon they've done just nothing at all!"

Belle was putting on a hooded ulster and drawing the hood over her head.

"Are you going *now* to look at these engines?" asked her companion.

"If you don't want me to stay with you, Amanda."

"No thanks, dear, *no one* can be of any use to poor me! Nothing but lying on this dismal couch and sniff, sniff, sniff at these salts is any good for *my* complaint. Fancy a pretty young girl like you caring to go and look at stupid engines with an old fogey of nearly sixty! You're quite an original! If it were this Mr.—what did you say the name was?—Worthington of Baltimore, it would be a more understandable proceeding!"

But Belle had gone out of the cabin.

III.

THE voyage was over. The *Titanic* had passed up New York's beautiful bay and lay at the Bright Star Pier at the foot of West Tenth Street. Mrs. Vanderstump, recovered from her physical sorrows, and dressed in a Paris walking costume, was all vivacity as she greeted a tall, thin, fashionable-looking man with a door-knocker beard.

"Here we are, Jasper!" the lady was saying in loud tones: "and a real bad time I've had! If you'll believe me, I haven't left my state-room—except to creep up into the companion for a few minutes and lie there, a heap of shawls—nor put on a civilised, tight-fitting gown till this morning. Once or twice I felt like sending a message to the captain, telling him to stop the ship for I was going to get out and walk. I cabled you I was bringing Belle Jeffers with me, didn't I? There she is over yonder talking to Miss Worthington of Baltimore. She's grown a beauty, hasn't she, since you last saw her, a school-chit? And what d'you think, Jasper?" she slightly lowered her loud tones; "the silly girl went in for a foolish impossible love affair before she left school, over at the other side, and all the eighteen months they've been travelling since then, she has gone on hugging the memory of this young ineligible and refusing good offers. So Jennie Jeffers in despair has given her to me for six months to cure her of this nonsense and get her well engaged by time Jennie and Jeremiah come home next spring; 'For you're a real smart chaperon, Amanda,' said Jennie, 'the smartest in New York City,' which amounts to saying the smartest on this planet, 'and if all goes well, you shall have the loveliest diamond necklet dollars can buy!' And I mean to earn that necklet, Jasper, and add fresh laurels to my chaperon-wreath. Belle!" she called shrilly, "come here, dear, and greet your cousin Jasper. My treatment has already begun the cure," she said to her husband, as the girl approached; "she looks heaps brighter than she did when she left London with me!"

Belle joined them here.

"Why, my little Belle, you've grown quite a woman, so you have!" was the greeting of Jasper Vanderstump. "I guess I mustn't ask for a cousin's privilege any longer. 'Mandie' (to his wife), "I don't know that you'll deserve much credit for finding a distinguished husband for *this* girl. She's fit to be a President's lady—she is *that*! Come along, girls, we must see your baggage through the Customs."

"Bother the Customs!" cried Mrs. Vanderstump: "I've 'bested' them, I'm glad to say, by landing in this new Paris walking-gown—first time of wearing! Belle, where's that elderly *beau* of yours, the doctor, who sat next you at table and showed you the engines? I'm curious to see him."

"I don't see him anywhere," answered Belle.

"Come along, girls!" reiterated Jasper Vanderstump.

* * * * *

The following morning Mrs. Vanderstump was very late down. As she phrased it herself—"One's first night on land is not to be ended in a hurry!"

"Belle not down yet?" she commented, as she strolled through the rooms, criticising the manner in which they had been kept during her absence. "I guess I'll have this suite fixed up fresh, in the same style as the Marchesa Casabella's. I'll ask Belle's opinion about it."

She touched an electric bell. "Tell Miss Belle Jeffers' maid to go to her room and find if she's wakened up yet," she said to the servant who answered her summons.

"The young lady went out two or three hours ago," the man replied.

"Went out two or three hours ago!" echoed Mrs. Vanderstump in astonishment. "There must be a mistake. Send Miss Jeffers' maid to me."

But the maid had only the same story to tell. Her young lady had risen, dressed herself with no assistance, and left the house at about nine o'clock. Mrs. Vanderstump recollected her dignity and repressed her amazement.

"Likely she's gone down town to see some friends," she said carelessly; but when the servants had left her, she spoke to herself in a different strain. "What in the wide world can she have gone out for so early? Has she gone to see these Worthingtons, I wonder? They were to stay in the city a day or two. But why should she stay all these hours? If only Jasper hadn't gone to Albany I could ask him what I ought to do."

The hours went on. Afternoon came, and just as Mrs. Vanderstump was at her wits' end to know what she should do with regard to her vanished charge, a letter was delivered, which, being opened in a good deal of agitation, read as follows:—

"MY DEAR AMANDA,—Please don't be mad with me! I was married this morning to the only man I ever loved or ever could love. I *did* obey mamma in not corresponding with him and never seeing him for a miserable year and a dreary half, and my poor heart breaking all the time. But when I happened upon him as the ship's doctor of the *Titanic*, and all the old feelings came back stronger than ever, and he told me he loved me even more than two years ago, why then I felt that I had obeyed mamma long enough, and I concluded to take my fate into my own hands. Gilbert is not going to be a ship's doctor any more; he's going to get his folk to start him in a medical practice at the West End. We shall have left the City when this reaches you. Do please, Mandie dear, forgive me and make my peace with mamma and papa, and don't think me a mean, deceitful girl for keeping you in the dark and telling you, when you asked if the doctor was young, 'He's something under sixty.' He *is* something under sixty, Mandie; he's thirty-four years under! Good-bye for the present, dear.

"Your loving, happy, penitent,

"BELLE MORTON."

Mrs. Vanderstump sits at her little davenport near the window of her boudoir. A sheet of letter-paper lies before her, on which she has written—

"My DEAR JENNIE,—How can I break the wretched news to you?"

She has got no farther than that. Her brows are puckered ; her mouth is drawn down at the corners. She is on extremely bad terms with herself and the world in general. Sundry phrases are echoing in her brain, and driving her wild with their mockery: "You're such a clever chaperon, Amanda!" "Yes, I am that! I'm a real smart chaperon! Belle will meet no undesirable *partis* under *my* wing! I undertake to give you back next spring an improved Belle, warranted to waste no thoughts on poor nobodies, and to give you also a highly advantageous prospective son-in-law, either a member of one of our *first* families, or a genuine solid swell of foreign manufacture!" "I really have no words to thank you, Amanda! . . . Jeremiah and I will give you the loveliest diamond necklet dollars can buy!"

Mrs. Vanderstump takes up her pen and lays it down again in despair. She glances out through the window into West Fiftieth Street, she glances at the glimpse of Fifth Avenue, obtainable to the right, broad and fair, bright with autumn sunshine, gay with carriages and promenaders; but the glance affords her no inspiration for the accomplishment of her hated task. Again is the pen taken up only to be again thrown down.

So sits the clever chaperon before her just-begun letter. And how long it will be before another word gets written—or whether another word ever will get written—I don't undertake to say.

PAST GIFTS.

No, keep my gifts. Why drag again
The old dream from its grave,
To pain a soul already wrecked
By sorrow's fierce death-wave?

I gave them thee when life and heart
Had known not one regret;
Why send them here to wake a strain
'Twere better to forget?

I cannot prize, nor cast aside,
These records of past years;
They touch some chords that thrill and wail
With love and unshed tears.

Then take them back! Torture me not
With things that mock my grief.
Recalling that which "might have been,"
Can never bring relief.

LONDON SWINDLES.

LONDON is the town, *par excellence*, of swindles. It is a cruel, friendless place; it is so big that it lacks a heart. You are but such a small unit among the millions that compose it. If you were to vanish, your place would be quickly filled by another; and, to quote the now classical *Mikado*, "you never would be missed." Nobody in London need know anything about their next-door neighbour. This accounts for the ease with which swindling is carried on there. The young and unwary housekeeper who settles in the great metropolis little knows the trials that await her unsophisticated mind. But a few years effect a great change in her character. She comes to London soft and yielding; she becomes, under its hardening influences, cold and adamant, so that she goes by a beggar in the street without a twinge, to whom she would formerly have given a donation. She now congratulates herself on having saved the penny from the clutches of the public-house round the corner, and passes on the other side.

Alas, we get hardened in our battle of life, where any and every stratagem seems fair when its object is to extort money. It is sad that such should be the case, for all improving books point such a very different moral. The moral of the story-books of our youth was the same, and most latter-day children have read Miss Jane Taylor's poem, beginning:

"Little Ann and her mother were walking one day,
Through London's wide city so fair,
When business obliged them to go by the way
That led them through Cavendish Square."

The poem is too long for repetition here, but the story goes on to tell how little Ann cried because she and her mother had to walk, and longed for a fine carriage and horses, when a beggar-girl appeared on the scene, and, with her piteous tale of woe, presented the other side of the picture. Little Ann's mother may indeed have guessed that the beggar was a fraud, but at any rate she used her to "point a moral and adorn a tale," as was the fashion of that age. Little Ann, impressed, cried no more; but, now we think of it, her mother did not seem to place implicit confidence in the beggar, for it does not appear that she gave her anything. Perhaps she belonged to the Charity Organisation Committee, or to its prototype of those days.

Charity organisation tickets, as a rule, cause the recipient to do anything but bless the donor, and though one can never do any harm by feeding the hungry, yet it is not always practicable to do as a young lady of our acquaintance once did, and take the beggar-

woman and her baby home to tea in our own drawing-room. True, the beggar did in this case erroneously describe herself as "a relative and scion of the late Sir Humphry Davy," but nevertheless, the situation had its disadvantages. The scion brought the measles with her into the house, as well as some other mementos of her visit. However, even Sir Humphry Davy's relative can have been nothing like so tiresome as a lost child upon whom a too soft-hearted lady once took pity. It was crying piteously in the street on a cold winter's day. The child was taken in and fed, after the example of Mrs. Carlyle, on oranges and cakes, and, like her, the lady verged speedily on distraction, for it still continued to howl. At last she could bear with the din no longer, and carried it to the police-station, where the police-sergeant smiled grimly from the height of his superior knowledge: "Lost! not a bit of it," he remarked; "children always says they're lost, but, lor' bless you, they'll find their way 'ome safe enough, if you don't take no notice; only leave 'em where they are."

Young and inexperienced London housekeepers seem to be known by repute, for to their doors come continual matutinal double-knocks. Sir Humphry Davy's scions are not the most troublesome of the visitors; for there are others who are even more difficult to get rid of. Sometimes it is a young man who "visits" for a tea firm. He presents his card, divests himself of his silk-faced overcoat, and enters the parlour with an air of intimacy, while the housemaid, taking him for a friend of the family, runs to fetch her mistress. The latter arrives breathless on the scene, imagining the stranger to be some unknown college friend of her husband's, whom she ought eagerly to welcome in his absence. The visitor greets her effusively, and at last extracts from his pocket a small parcel.

"I assure you, Mrs. Jones," he says, "that if you once try our tea—1s. 3d. a lb., and a book given in gratis—you will never try any other. Can I not persuade you to favour me with an order?"

Mrs. Jones is probably weak and yielding; she overcomes the shock to her nerves and orders a few pounds, only to be asked by her indignant cook next morning "whether she was expected to drink such trash?" But the young man is eventually got rid of, and Mrs. Jones feels that this in itself is well worth the outlay.

Sometimes, however, the "college friend" trick is fraught with worse consequences. A young man calls, representing himself as the husband's oldest and most intimate "*fidus achates*." (It is needless to say that this trick is only attempted with brides.) He has been doing some shopping, and has unfortunately not provided himself with enough cash; and will Mrs. Jones be so good as to advance him £5? Mrs. Jones, delighted to be of use to dear Tom's friend, contrives to produce the money with assistance from the cook and housemaid. But she is cruelly undeceived on Tom's return!

Another fraud is the seedy old woman with the mysterious black bag, who looks like a shabby pew-opener, and who states that she has

an important communication to make to the lady of the house. When confronted with the object of her search, she, after long and roundabout preliminaries, produces from the depths of her bag a small black bottle, and a folded paper. The said paper is, she explains, a recipe for furniture polish, which, through the extreme kindness of a "lady," she is enabled to offer you for the ridiculously small sum of eighteenpence. The bottle, which contains the said polish ready made, costs 4s. 6d. extra; and needless to say also, that "when you have once used it, you will never use any other," etc.

Then there is the pretended pedlar who brings patterns of wonderfully cheap goods; handkerchiefs to be "cleared" at a penny each, calico at three half-pence a yard, good lace at a half-penny, and other bargains. He mostly accounts for this extraordinary cheapness by a "salvage sale," and takes you in so well over the goods, which you see to be well worth the money, that you instantly fall an unsuspecting prey, and invest also in a few "dress lengths," afterwards discovering them to have been, alas! neither good nor cheap. The penny handkerchiefs and other things he happens not to have with him on this particular morning. All the household, including the servants, order immense quantities of them, but they never come. They were the bait held out to catch the unwary fly.

Yet there are other plagues of a more predatory sort. These are the friends who come with parcels to the front-door, and send them up to the "lady" to wait for an answer, then proceed to bag all the overcoats and portable hall furniture in the twinkling of an eye. Many and many a time has a town house been thus denuded, and the poor master of the house, when he returns, finds all his outdoor garments irretrievably gone!

Besides these unnecessary swindlers, there are also necessary ones; in the shape of dustmen, who, not content with extracting toll from the London housekeeper to the extent of two pence per week, yet resort, upon occasion, to other ruses for getting money. This is one of the modes of procedure.

"Please'm, the dustman says as you must give 'im a shilling."

"What for, Jane?"

"Why, for taking away a dead cat out of the dustbin."

"A dead cat! How can it have got there? Some tramp must have done it! Tell the dustman I'll give him sixpence."

Cook goes down with the message, but presently comes up again.

"Please'm, the dustman, he says as if you don't give 'im the shilling, he'll just leave the cat."

The persecuted mistress gives in; the dustman receives the shilling, and duly removes the dead cat, which, however, we must not omit to say that he has craftily first placed there. Iniquitous dustmen have even been known to carry about dead cats with them from one street to another, extracting a shilling toll from each house that is distant enough to ensure safety from detection.

Another very common swindle is the "fare" trick. It is well known by London housekeepers. You advertise for a servant; one comes to see you, having no intention of accepting the situation, and asks for her return fare. Or the swindle takes the following form. A woman begs you for her fare to some distant part of the country to see her dying husband. She makes out some plausible tale; you yield; and when some days after you happen to meet the same woman in the same locality, you for the first time doubt the genuineness of her plea.

Again, a common swindle is the bench trick. This is used at processions and show sights. Just a few minutes before the procession comes along a rough produces a common wooden bench and prop, for those far back in the crowd to stand on. Every one is charged sixpence or a shilling; the rough pockets the money and departs; while a minute later a policeman comes along and confiscates the prop, leaving the victims of the swindle a shilling each poorer than before, and able to see no better. This generally leads to some strong language, for naturally the true-born Briton does not mind a fair charge, be it never so high; but he objects to being swindled. Any one who doubts this has only to travel in a "pirate 'bus" from "Highgate Archway" to the "Bank," and watch an irascible old gentleman at the moment when fourpence is demanded of him instead of the customary twopence. A fiery colloquy ensues.

"I say, conductor, what's the meaning of this imposition?"

"Pay fourpence," says the conductor sturdily, refusing to argue.

After a quarter of an hour's fight, during which most of the other passengers have been impeded in their descent from the 'bus, the old gentleman is worsted, and proceeds to relieve his feelings.

And the average child has a no less keen sense of injustice than the average parent. He is apt to regard any attempt to deprive him of his natural rights as a form of swindling; for there cannot be said to be any humbug about the unregenerate child. He never beats about the bush. "Give your bun to that hungry beggar," said Tommy's mother to him, as they came out of a confectioner's shop one morning. The said bun was Tommy's second indulgence in that line, but he showed no alacrity in obeying. On the contrary he drew back, and his mother frowned. Further goaded he held out the bun, but drew his hand back again as a thought struck him. "Stop, though!" he cried, as he pulled out and ate three big raisins that invitingly showed themselves; then he reluctantly gave it to the beggar.

Tommy, at any rate, regarded the deprivation of his bun as a swindle; but not having the means of resisting, he gave in—as we do to our London swindles—for the sake of peace. The "beggar" walked away easily with the bun, the lady's purse, and an undisturbed mind to boot; for possession—in London especially—is nine points of the law.

NOT TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR.



IT was but the soft touch of a hand, a small, delicate hand like that of a woman, yet it filled my whole being with an instinctive and unutterable horror. It was not the warm touch of a hand of flesh and blood. It was not the heavy, lifeless hand of the dead. It was cold as marble, yet it was animate. Gently, but firmly it rested on mine; palpable; perceptible to the sense of feeling—but it was invisible. I felt its pressure as surely as I felt my cheeks grow pale, and my breath come thick and fast. But it was invisible.

I had lighted a pipe as the inevitable preliminary to the commencement of work on a new canvas, and settled comfortably before the easel, when the inexplicable interruption occurred. With a startled exclamation I involuntarily dropped the brush that I had taken up. As I did so, the touch was gone.

I looked fearfully around. The sun was high in the heavens. The woods were bright with the glowing tints of autumn. The birds fluttered, and sang, and preened their feathers in the tangled underwood. Emboldened by the silence, a hare came leaping leisurely across the glade; that was all that met the eye.

Was I dreaming? Or mad? The questions flashed into my brain with the speed of lightning, and I knew not how to answer them. The icy touch had seemed so real, so actual, and yet—how could such things be?

Seeking calmness in the reflection that I had been the victim of a singular delusion, and laughing, to inspire myself with a much-needed confidence, I picked up the brush, which had fallen in the short grass, worked it to a point on the palette, and renewed the attempt to commence the picture that I had determined should bring me fame and fortune.

Before I could make one stroke of the brush, before it had come into contact with the canvas, the cold, unearthly hand once more rested on mine, as though with the intention of guiding its movements.

My blood thrilled with an awful dread at this repeated evidence of

an unseen mysterious presence. I could be passive no longer. Inaction was unendurable, and, springing to my feet, I felt the hand removed, and knew that I was free from its influence. But it had been no fantastic creation of a disordered brain that had troubled me. Another sense confirmed the truth of this. Hastily glancing at my hand, I saw distinctly, fading from the pink flesh, the impression of fingers.

It was but a momentary glimpse, and the faint white marks had disappeared, but this corroboration of the conviction that an invisible hand had grasped mine, set my heart throbbing with a wild, unnatural speed.

There was no work for me that day. Who could work under such circumstances? Apart from the want of courage to remain alone in the woods after such a weird experience, my nerves were too unstrung to let me even hope to make any progress that would be of artistic value. And I was reluctant to risk a repetition of that ghostly touch. The mere thought of the possibility made me bundle up my things with careless haste and hurry back to the village.

It was a relief to reach the high-road, and to see the church tower rising over the red-tiled roofs of the cottages that clustered about the grey, weather-worn building. It was a relief to get within the walls of the Manor House, and never before had I properly appreciated the advantages of a large family. To see my sister's smiling face, to watch her husband smoking the pipe of peace with an untroubled mind, happy in the consciousness that the harvest was in, and the turnips were looking beautiful, to be surrounded by a group of merry children, and to hear the babel of voices that greeted my arrival, was an intense relief. For I hated quiet and solitude at the moment. The remembrance of that supernatural hand lingered in my memory, and filled me with a strong desire for the companionship of mankind.

Half-a-dozen times during the day I was on the verge of revealing the unaccountable incident, but a sense of shame kept me silent on the subject. It was like a confession of cowardice, and what credence could I expect them to give my story? What faith should I have in it if told by another? It was so incredible, that I even wavered in my own belief, as the hours passed by, and the world jogged on as usual. I might have been mistaken. Our senses play us strange tricks. I must have been mistaken. Come what might, I would put it to the proof, and make a further essay on the morrow. And I would go alone.

The morning came, calm and bright, the very weather for painting in the open air; but with it came an increased reluctance to carry out my resolution of the previous night, and I should have welcomed a wet day. There was no signs of rain in the sky, however, and even the barometer refused to afford an excuse for further respite when I appealed to it. It persistently indicated a continuance of fair weather.

If my manhood had not shrunk from following such a course of

action, I should have shirked a strict adherence to the programme I had arranged, and have taken one of the boys with me. But I put away the thought. As I had resolved to go alone, I would do so. If there were danger to encounter, I would brave it without exposing another to the risk.

However, as a pardonable concession to my sense of insecurity, I would let Dusky come with me. It would be a treat for him, poor fellow.

Dusky was a fox terrier, animated with all the restless and pugnacious instincts of his kind, and was already raving at his chain as an indignant protest against being left behind. I let him loose, and after allowing him to work off a portion of his high spirits by an indulgence in a few wild rushes in various directions with no apparent object, I whistled him to heel, and we went on our way.

It was not without a tremor that I turned into the woods and reached the scene of my uncanny adventure; but I went steadily on, for I had determined to drift, and to abstain from resisting the course of events. There was a mystery, and it should be solved by my means. As I neared the spot, all the doubts, that I had argued myself into accepting, concerning the actuality of that strange experience, had vanished from my mind. I knew it to be true. I felt it to be true.

I lost no time, and soon got my easel fixed, my palette set, and everything in order for a commencement. So far I was free from interruption. Then I paused, as a man pauses before a cold bath in mid-winter, and begins to wonder if it is advisable to make the final plunge. Then I sneered at my hesitation, and, somewhat deliberately, stretched out my hand for a brush.

It was not encouraging. Dusky, obedient for once, was lying at my feet, guarding with unwinking watchfulness the box of colours I had placed in his charge. He lifted up his head, gave a short, startled bark, then a dismal howl, and then ignominiously bolted towards home with his stumpy tail between his legs.

I knew what was to follow this desertion, but repressing a strong impulse to imitate so prudent an example, I nerved myself to take the brush. I am not ashamed to admit that I could see the point tremble as I filled it with colour, and rested my hand on the mahlstick.

Again the cold, unearthly touch—not as before—not on my hand. Now it lay lightly on my forehead.

It acted as an irresistible spell. I felt no more fear, no consciousness of danger. It banished all the nervous apprehension that had perturbed me. It urged me to work with feverish haste and intensity. That was the predominating influence it exercised, and I yielded up my powers unresistingly to its sway.

Never before had I painted so rapidly, and with such results. Unconsciously, the picture grew beneath my hands with a speed that

was marvellous. Every stroke of the brush told, and a bold precision, that had ever been lacking in my style, was vividly apparent. But I was a mere machine; the passive agent of a supernatural power. The compelling hand never moved from its resting-place. I saw the progress of the work, but it was as though in a dream, and I had not even a shadowy idea of what scene the picture would depict, or what form it would ultimately take. It was the work of my hands, but I had no further part in shaping its composition.

I worked for hours without intermission. Steadily, persistently, I toiled on beneath the influence of that unseen presence, until the sun was sinking low in the sky, and the light fading into a dim obscurity. Then I felt the hand lifted from my brow, and with a deep sigh of exhaustion, the brushes and palette dropped from my cramped fingers. It was finished, and I was free. Weary and faint, but free.

I looked at the picture on my easel as I should have looked at the strange work of another artist. Every man has a distinctive style that is easily recognised, but there were no traces of my individuality to be discovered here. I pride myself on a minute finish and smoothness, and an attention to detail which unfriendly critics stigmatise as excessive. This was painted with a vigorous boldness, and a dramatic force that were wonderfully effective. Opposed as the method was to my whole artistic creed, I was compelled to acknowledge that truth.

The scene which I had involuntarily depicted was the glade that lay before me, but it wore the dress of another season. The soft, tender hues of early summer replaced the richer, and more brilliant autumnal tints that I saw in nature as I gazed around. The earth was carpeted with fresh young grass, and the ferns were unfolding their fronds in the warmth of the golden sunlight that gleamed through the leafy trees, and fell in delicate tracery on the gnarled roots that cropped out in the mossy, unfrequented path.

Peaceful as the spot appeared, it had been a stage for the consummation of a tragedy.

Crushing the wild hyacinths that lifted their stems above the shorter growth of verdure, lay the body of a girl. Her upturned face was pallid with the shadow of death, and the white dress about her breast discoloured by a deep red stain. Turning away with a lingering look of hatred at his victim, was a man tall and of stately bearing, but with a face branded with the deep traces of evil passions, and a life of unrestrained profligacy. He was in the act of wiping his rapier with a handful of grass which he had torn up by the roots. The position brought into strong prominence a peculiar scar that marked the back of his left hand—a scar shaped like the rough representation of a horse-shoe. His dress was the dress of the eighteenth century. I thought the middle, or end of that period, for my knowledge of historical costume was deplorably superficial; but I knew that I was safe in deciding that it was of the eighteenth century.

I saw all these details in a very brief space of time. I allowed myself no more, for darkness was gathering on the face of the earth, and I was eager to leave the woods. Not that any expectation of evil, or of further manifestations of a ghostly nature, troubled me. My dread of the supernatural had vanished beneath the touch of the unseen hand that had rested on my forehead. As it had dominated my will, so it had given me courage, and I felt an absolute assurance that with the completion of the picture, its immediate purpose was accomplished.

This proved to be so, but as I reached the Manor House my heart rejoiced within me, for in spite of my absolute assurance, the lovely walk along the gloomy road was not a pleasant one. I was intent on speculating on what the end of the mystery would be; what developments were to ensue; and how they would affect me. For I realised that the picture I was carrying was merely a link in a chain of events that would not terminate in this inconclusive way. The more I thought of it, the more certain I was of that.

The figures of the man and the dead girl were evidently portraits. Such a distinctive mark as the scar on his hand led me to that conclusion. And if they were portraits they were meant to be recognised. But by whom?

Not by me, for I failed to identify either of the faces, or to connect the tragic incident portrayed with any history or legend with which I was acquainted. It was a mystery, and time only could reveal its signification.

I took the picture to my own room, for it required some consideration before deciding to confide the story of its production to my sister and her husband, or to keep my own counsel. For the present, I determined on adopting the latter course, convinced that the end—be it what it might—would be attained without my intervention.

The night passed; the morning came; and no further development ensued. During breakfast, however, the arrangements for the coming day were under discussion.

"What are you going to do, Jack?" asked my sister, appealing to me as though I was the pivot on which all things turned.

"I was going to drive Edith over to Cummington," I replied. "The Prescotts want us to see the alterations in the church, and to lunch with them afterwards. But if——"

"There's no 'if' in the case, Jack," returned that sister of mine. "You know you are bent on going, and I shall not be sorry to get rid of you. Sir George is coming to look over the house this morning, and see what he thinks of the suggested improvements."

Sir George Averill was my brother-in-law's landlord. He had recently married money and an American woman—I place them in the order of importance they retained in his estimation—and he was improving his estate with his newly-acquired dollars. A wonderful

business man he was too, for a country gentleman, energetic, and with a keen eye for everything concerning his inheritance. When a new kitchen-range was put in at a farm-house, he paid a visit to inspect the workmanship and inquire about its success. If a cowl was added to a chimney-pot, he called to ask if the smoke nuisance had abated, and whether the addition creaked much in a high wind.

The descent of this gentleman upon the Manor House fluttered its inmates like the swoop of an eagle on a dove-cote. Luncheon was uncertain, and dinner problematical when he was expected, for the hour of his arrival and the time of his departure were equally doubtful. This accounted for my sister's approval of our plan. As she had told us, she was glad to get rid of me, and of the responsibility of satisfying my mid-day wants.

Cummington was about five miles by road from our village, and we had a very pleasant drive through the woods, an interesting visit to the church, a remarkably good luncheon, and altogether a delightful day. It was between the gloaming and the dark when we reached home in high spirits. These were soon chastened, however, by finding the dejection and dismay that reigned within doors.

"Why, William, old fellow, what's the matter?" I asked the question hastily, for his face wore an expression that perceptibly lengthened it, and told a tale of its owner's perturbation.

My brother-in-law shook his head with an air of gravity, then with a dignified gesture referred me to my sister for an answer. He was famed for taciturnity. She was not.

"What made you paint that horrid picture?" she commenced, in a reproachful tone.

What made me, indeed? I was not able to satisfy myself on that point, so I had to ignore her interrogation.

"You must have been mad to do such a thing," she went on. "Perfectly mad. However, Sir George Averill is coming again this evening to see you about it. You must settle the matter with him."

"Does he want to buy it, Kate?" I spoke with an assumption of gaiety, but my heart misgave me. Was the murder an incident in the history of the Averills?

"Buy it!" said my sister, and there was an infinite amount of contempt in her voice. To her, the supposition was too absurd. Kinship is a bar to the due appreciation of genius, except in the case of a mother. That is a solemn truth. I know it.

"Sir George was in a most amiable mood," she continued. "He went all over the house, agreed to every one of the alterations we had suggested, and even listened favourably to a proposition for a permanent reduction of rent. I believe he would have met our views on the subject, but when we came to your room, that picture destroyed our hopes in a moment."

Here my brother-in-law groaned over his recollection of the scene. An irritated landlord knows no laws of politeness.

"I left the picture locked up in the wardrobe," I said. And I had done so. My sister looked incredulous.

"It was on the easel in the centre of the room," was her assertion.

I was compelled to believe that this change had been accomplished by the agency of the ghostly hand. If it was so, its operations were evidently not confined to the scene of the tragedy. This was not a pleasant reflection, as it might make itself apparent anywhere and at any time, and I had no desire for any further manifestations of its power. I looked blankly at my sister as she resumed her narrative.

"Sir George is a little short-sighted, and he went up to the easel to examine the picture closely. 'Some of your brother's work?' he began, when his face changed. His rage was sudden and violent. He broke into a torrent of words. He wanted to know the meaning of the insult, the reason for so gross an outrage on the honour of an ancient house. It must have been premeditated. He threatened dire vengeance on its author, and on us as accomplices. He asked for you, raved when we told him you were from home, and would not return until evening. Stormed when we tried to pacify him, and assure him that we were ignorant of the cause of his anger, and finally bounced out of the house, swore at the groom, thrashed the horses unmercifully, going on like a brute, and—er—er——"

"Going off like a madman," said I, with a view of helping my sister out of her difficulty, and rounding the sentence for her.

"Going off like a madman," she said, graciously accepting the phrase. "An hour after, he sent the groom back with a message, saying that he would call on you this evening for an explanation. We will have the explanation now, if you please. What does it all mean? Why does this picture arouse Sir George's wrath? I insist on an answer, John."

When my sister calls me "John," and insists on anything, she is not to be trifled with, so after some hesitation, I related my supernatural experience, and the inexplicable way in which that picture came into being.

The story was received with less incredulity than I had anticipated. The mysterious and startling effect produced on Sir George by the painting influenced my hearers, and I escaped the derision that I had expected would be heaped upon me. Both of them were as ignorant of the scene depicted, and of the actors, as I was. But there was nothing remarkable in that. My brother-in-law had come into the neighbourhood but two years ago, and they were not likely to be familiar with local traditions and history. All that could be done was to await patiently—or impatiently—the course of events. Sir George Averill must be told the simple truth, and it was probable that the approaching interview would clear away all the clouds that enshrouded the affair.

The intervening time passed but slowly. We were nervous; anxious about the result of the visit Sir George had threatened us with;

conjecturing reasons for his anger, and its possible consequences ; and suffering from the common propensity of doubting minds to look upon the future in its most gloomy aspect. It was a positive relief when a vigorous peal of the bell announced the presence of the invader.

Very cold, very dignified, was the bow we received, and stately and magisterial the air with which he seated himself in an easy-chair at my sister's invitation.

"I have called as you know, Mrs. Aster," he commenced, with the studied deliberation of one reciting a set speech, "to receive the explanation of your brother's conduct that was denied me this morning. Why has he been guilty of this malicious insult? Sir!"—turning fiercely on me—"I demand an explanation!"

I was prepared to pay Sir George Averill all the deference due to his rank and social position, but not to be brow-beaten, or daunted by the frown of a great man on a small scale.

"You must adopt a more conciliatory tone in asking for the information you desire, Sir George," I retorted, with the most perfect suavity that I could command. "But I am willing to exchange confidences with you on the subject."

Our invader was so amazed at my audacity, that he found it necessary it give vent to his emotions by an indignant snort. My sister started ; my brother-in-law looked alarmed.

"You see," I continued, "we are quite in the dark as to the cause of your annoyance. Why should the sight of this picture so deeply move you?"

"Do you mean to tell me, sir," Sir George cried, wrathfully, "that you, the painter of that picture, are ignorant of the just cause of my indignation?"

"Certainly," I replied. "Most certainly. And if you will hear my story quietly, I shall be pleased to relate the incidents connected with the picture that has the misfortune to meet with your disapproval."

Sir George Averill bowed his acceptance of my conditions. Words were beyond his power at that moment.

Briefly I recounted, in matter-of-fact language, the tale I had told to my sister and her husband. I made no attempt to bring into undue prominence any of the features of the strange story, or to account for it.

As it happened, so I told it.

Sir George fulfilled his engagement, and allowed me to finish my narrative without intervention. When I ceased speaking, he remained for a few moments brooding over what he had heard. Then he spoke, looking keenly into my eyes, as though to read my inmost thoughts:

"What am I to believe? It is an incredible tale. A ghostly hand. I shall have faith in its existence when I feel its icy touch."

He stretched forth his own, and his lips wore a mocking smile as he did so. But the smile died away, and his face suddenly turned ghastly and livid. With a stifled exclamation, he shrank back

dismayed. We knew the cause of his terror, and my sister gave a faint shriek.

"Well, Sir George," I said, "I see you are satisfied of the truth of my incredible tale now."

"Let us go into another room," he whispered, and his eyes glanced restlessly around. "Anywhere from this hateful place."

His agitation was so great that there was nothing to do but comply with his wishes. We all went into my sanctum, Sir George carefully keeping in our midst, and well in the light of the lamp I was carrying. The picture still stood in the middle of the room. I placed the lamp on a small table at the side of the easel, and we grouped about it, silently for a time, but the stillness was oppressive, and we were all uneasy.

"Let me apologise, and ask your pardon for my rudeness," Sir George began. "When you hear my story, I am sure you will admit that I had ample cause for irritation when I first saw this picture. I will conceal nothing from you, but I must ask that my explanation may be considered confidential, as it entails entering into the details of a portion of our family history that is painful to dwell upon."

Without pausing for any pledge, he continued :

"My great-grandfather was a soldier, who fought under the command of General Wolfe in Canada, and was severely wounded at Quebec. When he returned to England at the termination of the campaign, he married. Men lived wild lives in those days, and my ancestor was no exception to the rule, and young and beautiful as his wife was, he was too old in sin for her to work a reformation in his character. Wine and gallantry, dice, cards, and every form of wild dissipation he continued to indulge in, wrecking the happiness of the woman whom he had vowed to love and cherish. In one brief year there were reproaches, dissension, strife. Then came a mysterious tragedy. One day, in the spring of 1763, the dead body of Lady Averill was found by a woodman, lying in the very glade you have here painted, foully murdered. She had been stabbed to the heart by an unknown hand. Her husband was distracted on learning the awful event, and quite unable to assist in the vain attempts to discover and apprehend the murderer. The country was searched, but without result, and after protracted investigations, the efforts had to be abandoned. From that time Colonel Averill was a changed man. Stern and cold to the world, he devoted his whole life to his son, who was but an infant at his mother's death. He saw the boy grow to manhood, but soon after died, apparently believing that the murderer of his wife would yet be discovered. One phrase was ever on his lips, 'From generation to generation the truth shall be revealed.' These details I heard from my father, and the revelation to me is here."

He pointed to the picture, with evident emotion.

"And the murderer is?" I asked.

"My ancestor himself," replied Sir George. "His portrait hangs in the gallery at the Hall, with the scar upon the hand as you have represented it."

J. TULLOCH FISHER.

LORD AUGUSTUS'S WOOING.

SHE was exceedingly pretty. And he was in love with her. So he told himself—in love at last! He had flirted with Gertrude and Mabel, with Polly and Cassie, with Amy, Eugenia, and Chloe. . . . but now it was a different thing altogether.

This was love, real genuine love, and he was ready to place himself and all his possessions at her feet.

Figuratively speaking—for of course he was well aware that long before he should reach that lowly position, she would throw herself into his arms and whisper in a tumult of joy, that she was the most fortunate woman in the world.

And so of course she was; many a girl would give a good deal to stand in her shoes. Why, Cassie, and Polly, and Chloe, and Belle, and that little dark-eyed girl (whose name he never could recollect), how they had ogled and courted him! But he was no fool, and—well—he had eluded them all, and was free to make Norah the happiest of women.

Of course he knew that marriage wasn't all skittles; married men had a lot to put up with, and any fellow about to run his head into the noose should do it with his eyes wide open.

But after all sooner or later he must settle down, and he really believed that Norah would make him a very jolly little wife, cheery, don't you know—er—never worry a fellow, wear the right sort of gowns, and do credit to her husband.

"She's no vice in her," he said to himself; "she'll wait hand and foot upon me, dear little soul, and be glad enough, so long as I'm pleased. That's what a man wants, a companion to sympathise—and not bother when she isn't wanted."

Musing thus upon matrimony and the woman of his choice, Lord Augustus Dangerleigh sauntered along the pavement towards Norah's dwelling.

Knocking at the door, he was instantly admitted, and ushered into the large luxurious drawing-room.

Seated at a rosewood escritoire was a fair graceful woman, the little table before her literally covered with sheets of foreign paper, some inscribed with her own handwriting, some with another's.

"How fortunate I am to find you thus alone," he said, taking her hand in his. A shade passed across her face—could it be of annoyance? He rejected the idea with scorn.

"My mother and my sister are gone to the exhibition," she said shortly.

"It is a lucky fate that has kept you at home," he replied.

"I had letters to write," she remarked, glancing at the still wet paper.

"Happy friend," he murmured, "to be the recipient of such tokens. Chronicles and confidences? I suppose I dare not presume to look?"

With a quick movement Norah swept every sheet out of sight.

"They are strictly private," she said with heightened colour.

Another man, noticing the coldness of her manner, might have trembled for his answer. Not so Lord Augustus.

"She is shy with me," he thought. "I have been so long making up my mind, she is almost giving up hope, poor little girl."

"Miss Linden," he said impressively, "I have something to tell you."

"Indeed?" she queried, lifting a delicately pencilled brow.

"Something very important," he continued solemnly.

A musical little laugh broke from her pretty lips.

"Do tell me," she said, "what is it?"

"Guess!" he replied, "I will give you three guesses."

"Guesses are snares," she answered laughing.

"One, two, three guesses," he said persuasively.

"I know," she cried, "it is a fresh brand of cigars, and you have been fortunate enough to secure them all for yourself!"

"Wrong!" he said, "you must guess again, Miss Linden."

Norah thought for a moment.

"A choice wine?" she asked presently.

"You are quite, quite wrong," he said. "Be careful, you have only one guess left now."

"What can it be?" she said, "if it is not cigars, nor wine?"

He remained silent, watching the graceful poise of her little head.

"Oh," she said suddenly, "how stupid I am, why, of course, I ought to have known! It is—it must be something to do with your dinner. Is it, is it a new savoury, some delicious concoction of the cook at your club?"

He smiled at her but did not speak.

"Ah!" she cried clapping her hands, "I am right at last. I know that there is nothing on earth so important as dinner!"

"You are not right at all," he observed.

"Not right?" she said, disappointed, "not right after all? I told you that guesses were snares."

"Try once more," he urged.

"What is the use?" she asked; "let me see—no, I positively cannot think of anything else that you would consider important."

Her pretty little forehead was wrinkled with thought, but it was evident that no fresh suggestion was forthcoming.

"You cannot think of anything else that I should consider important?" he repeated looking at her with gentle reproach.

"No," she replied meeting his gaze, with eyes sparkling with fun,
"I really cannot."

"Then I will tell you."

There was a pause. Lord Augustus waited quite thirty seconds; he was anxious to secure her full attention, for it was no ordinary piece of news he had to communicate.

"I," he said slowly, "I am going to be married!"

"To be married?" she cried. "Oh no! not really?"

"And why not, Miss Linden? why should I not marry?"

"Oh, because and because," she said her eyes twinkling once more.

"Because and because?" he asked rising from his seat and drawing nearer to her.

"You have not told me her name?" she said. "Who is she?"

"Do you not know?" he said tenderly, and as he looked down at the fair woman beside him, the small organ which did duty with Lord Augustus as heart felt quite pleasantly agitated. "Ah," he said inwardly, "this is love!"

Norah half rose from her chair, some glimmering of the truth began to dawn upon her.

"Who is she?" she asked again.

"She is the most charming woman in the world, lovely, amiable."

"Quite a pattern young lady," she said mockingly.

"Ah," he thought, "she is jealous! I will not keep her in suspense any longer."

"It is you," he said tenderly; "you, my darling!"

"Me!" she cried incredulously. "It is impossible!"

"Why impossible, my dearest?"

He thought that she was overwhelmed by the magnitude of her good fortune.

"There is some great mistake," she said. "I—I am engaged to be married."

"Engaged!"

"Yes," she answered. "I am engaged to Mr. Vincent."

"Since when?" he asked angrily.

"Since last summer," she replied.

"Then," he declared, "I have been misled, deceived!"

"Deceived?" she questioned. "What do you mean?"

"You must have seen, you must have known," he went on in the heat of his indignation, "that I loved you."

"Nonsense!" she interrupted quickly. "Love! Oh, no," she added, laughing, "not love. To flirt is a verb, I will allow, that you can conjugate more fluently than most men, but to love—ah, that is what you have never known."

"Really, Miss Linden," he observed stiffly, "I must be allowed to judge of the state of my own affections." Again hot anger overcame him, and he said sharply: "This other fellow—he—he is of course very rich?"

"He is poor," she answered, "that is why we are not already married. But he has worked and saved—for me—and now he tells me that we have enough to start upon——"

"But this is madness, sheer madness. Your mother ought not to allow it. Miss Linden, believe me, you will not be able to live without the luxuries to which you are accustomed."

"I do not care for luxury."

"You do not understand," he interrupted, "what you are doing. Think before it is too late. Hear me, Norah; I can give you everything that the heart of a woman loves!"

"Everything that the heart of a woman loves, Lord Augustus?"

"Everything! Diamonds, superb! some of the finest in——"

"I do not care a pin about diamonds!" she returned quickly.

"Title!"

"The title I love is that of Mrs. Vincent," she murmured softly.

"Servants, horses, carriages, unlimited pin-money!"

"Horses, carriages, pin-money," she cried, "what are they to me in comparison with the man that I love! Lord Augustus, I told you just now that you had never known love; I will go further. I tell you now that you know nothing of a woman's heart."

He gave a gesture of scornful dissent, but she scarcely heeded it.

"Ah," she cried, "I am not speaking of those poor apologies for women, to whom luxury and amusement are the aim and object of their lives; they are dolls, not women. I mean the woman, the true woman, who, in the heart of her husband finds all that her own heart can desire!"

He looked at her with a bitter pang.

"If it had not been for this other man," he said roughly, "you would have loved me."

"Never!" she said quickly. "Shall I tell you why I love Mr. Vincent? Because he is a man to whom life is a reality. He has gone down into the arena and has taken part in the struggle. Hard work and self-denial have left their marks upon him, but they are honourable scars, and—I love him with all my heart and soul! We shall have but a moderate income between us, yet we shall be happy! Ah, you do not understand, Lord Augustus, but we shall be able to face economy and sacrifice—for we shall meet them together. Believe me, there is no wealth that can compare with love. Yes," she added dreamily, as her thoughts wandered to the man who was so far away, "yes, we shall look into each other's eyes, and we shall know that life is love, and love is life!"

* * * * *

"Good heavens!" muttered Lord Augustus, as he retraced his steps to his club, "it is amazing, it is inconceivable, what fools some women can be!"

